

MERRY ENGLAND.

FEBRUARY, 1890.

Ellen Middleton.

PART II.

THE scene is now shifted to London; and we are introduced to Alice as the wife of Henry, pursuing her simple and saintly life in holy worship, in works of mercy, and in such opportunities of communion with natural objects as are at her command. She begins Lord Byron, and quits his works because they open to her a world of evil; she betakes herself to Scott, and reads him with guileless pleasure, but desists because she finds the excitement even of that study tends to disquiet her mind and disqualify her for her path in life.

Her husband, though not wilfully and gratuitously unkind to her, still burns with the fatal ardour of his love for Ellen; and as we now enter upon a new ground, we must render our testimony to the perfect delicacy with which the history of that unfortunate and sinful attachment is described. He avows to Ellen the fact; he apprises her, too, that he, with one other person, knows her secret; and thus brings his last great engine of power over her into operation. She remains wholly untainted by participation in his passion; but partly from intellectual and imaginative sympathies, more from her apprehensions and dependence, she has not courage peremptorily to repel him from her society, and with most selfish cruelty he parades their apparent intimacy in the intercourse which London society affords, racking the mind of Edward with doubts and jealous

fears, and involving his victim more and more deeply in the net. Real generosity of nature, however, struggles manfully in the mind of Edward against presumptions that would have appeared demonstrations to an illiberal mind, and his character shines brightly in this part of the book.

Lovell uses a casual opportunity to extort from Ellen Middleton an oath that she will never reveal to Edward the secret of her cousin's death ; and on this concession acquaints her that Mrs. Tracy also witnessed the event—that having hated her as Alice's rival in his affections, the old woman also abhorred her as the murderess of her cousin for the sake of the estate ; that under the united impulses of conscience and hatred, she had resolved to expose Ellen, and had only pledged herself to withhold the disclosure upon Henry's assurance that Ellen would never marry Edward, and, consequently, would never enter into possession of the property which Mr. Middleton intended to make conditional upon that event. Not that this of itself would have sufficed to keep Mrs. Tracy quiet : her silence was really a tribute to Henry, who, through his wife, possessed the key to all the old woman's feelings ; and Henry, instead of using this power with disinterestedness for Ellen's sake, represents to her the promise as being clogged with a condition on which he placed a value because it kept, or tended to keep, her by one stage less removed from his reach, than if she were to become the wife of his rival. She groans under the tyranny of help so afforded, and her spirit ever and anon rises into indignation ; but the spell of her old sin remains upon her—she is obliged to quell her own pride, and even to soothe his when she has wounded it. Meanwhile his relation to Alice is that of an abstract acknowledgment of, and respect for, her virtues, with something like a remote and feeble love, not more than is extorted by near contact with purity from the most reluctant will ; his frenzied passion for Ellen has for its first law the gratification of his own selfish pride ; for its second (although only to operate

when he is powerless for the former end) the promotion of her welfare.

A momentary danger from the attack of a mad dog, from which Ellen is rescued by Edward, and a *réplique* on her part, in our view supererogatory, by the application of her lips to draw the venom from the wound he had received in the effort, naturally enough produce a relative position of a decisive character. The result shall be related in the heroine's own words, extracted from a letter she writes to Lovell to obtain his aid with Mrs. Tracy.

An involuntary spontaneous acknowledgment of affection which escaped me in a moment of imminent peril to him, incurred in rescuing me from a similar peril, was followed by an assumption on his part that our marriage was to be the natural result of such a confession. My uncle considered it in the same light ; and I found myself involved in an engagement which, in cool blood, I could never have contracted. An attack of illness, resulting from the events of the morning, has since kept Edward in a state which would have made any extraordinary emotion dangerous in the extreme. Against my will, and at the same time impressing this warning upon me, my aunt took me to him ; and in terror for his health, with outward calmness and inward shame and misgivings, I gave the promise which must lead to my ruin, unless you can save me.

During the interval before his reply, the tempest rises in her soul again ; and even while she utters the words of prayer, she conceives for a moment the idea of braving her fate, of meeting accusation with reckless denial, and trusting to her own resources and Lovell's aid to repel it. For she knows that as she serves him through fear, he must serve her through passion.

But as the thought passed through my mind I shuddered at the rapid strides I was making in falsehood, and felt a horror of myself which I can hardly describe. There was I, kneeling in mock homage before God—that God Who had saved both Edward and myself from a fate worse than death—while bad passions were raging in my soul, and thoughts of evil working in my mind.

The posture of prayer, the words which I had mechanically uttered, brought on one of those sudden and unaccountable revulsions of feeling which sometimes succeed the fiercest assaults of the tempter, as if our guardian angel had wrestled with the spirit of evil, and driven him away for the time. I remembered her to whom much was forgiven because she had loved much; and as I thought of that Saviour, that man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, at whose feet she knelt—ay, even while seven foul fiends were struggling in her heart—I longed to kneel before Him too in deep prostration of spirit, and lay all my sorrows, all my sins, all my difficulties at His sacred feet, bathing them as she did with tears, and wiping them with the hairs of her head. Oh! if in that moment of emotion, in that hour of penitence, I could have gone to one of those who, ministering at God's altar and endowed with His commission, have authority from Him to pronounce words of pardon in His name; if the fatal barrier which habit and prejudice so often raise between the priest of God and the erring and overburthened souls committed to his charge had not in my case existed; if from his lips I could have heard the injunction to forsake all and follow Jesus, and he had added, "Do this and be forgiven"—it might have changed my fate. But, as it was, my penitence spent itself in unavailing tears; and my yearnings towards a better course ended in the same bewildering and oft-repeated question, which I could not—dared not—answer to myself or for myself: "Where lies the path of duty through the intricate maze in which guilt, misfortune, and weakness have so hopelessly entangled me?" Once more I rose from my knees without any fixed purpose, without any steady resolution—the creature of circumstance, and the sport of events.

Henry Lovell, in answer to her appeal, informs her that he has purchased, or rather extorted, from Mrs. Tracy a promise to remain silent after, and notwithstanding, her marriage to Edward, but not without a frightful conflict between his subtle and her stubborn will, in which he had only gained the victory by threatening her that he, on his part, would reveal to Alice the whole history of her grandmother's contrivance for her marriage; would proclaim that his love for Ellen Middleton was unalterable, and that, in revenge for the overthrow of her happiness, he would quit England at once, alone, and for ever. But in

this letter, which is a masterpiece of art and double-intention, though he has made a great effort, though for Ellen's sake he does that which no other can, and does it in order to enable her to consummate her union with his rival, his proceeding is still leavened with the desperate tenacity of his self-love; a pledge of future kindness to Alice is part of his bargain with Mrs. Tracy, and he implores Ellen to assist him in fulfilling it, to lend him, by her society and friendship, the strength which alone can enable him to fulfil his word—and to continue, that is to say, those confidential relations which are the condition of the prolongation of his power.

The marriage approaches, and poor Ellen writhes under the torture of her severe, but true-hearted, uncle's address :

"On you Ellen, and on Edward, I have settled all my property. Since the day that I lost my only child this has been my fixed purpose. I was anxious to live long enough to see it accomplished, and I am thankful that wish has been granted. I have one request to make to you both. Call your eldest girl *Julia*, make her wear this chain—it was round my child's neck when she died—and if I live, let me see her often. Now go, and God bless you both !"

I don't know what I said or did; these words fell like burning lead on my soul, and I almost sank on the ground. Edward took me out of the room, and the only hour of relief which that day afforded was when, with his arm around me and my head on his shoulder, he suffered me to weep in silence.

. . . Then he raised my head gently but forcibly; then, with his sweet smile and his low deep voice, he whispered to me that his happiness was unutterable, his love boundless, his soul mine for ever. His words—words of passion from him whom I worshipped—at whose side I felt myself unworthy to live—at whose feet I would have been content to die; those words, those looks, those tones, thrilled through my whole frame and wrought on my brain, turning remorse for the past and fear for the future into a delirious dream of joy, even as laudanum can change pain itself into ecstasy.

Then follows a passage, which in one fragment has so much dramatic grandeur as to be worthy of Scott in the "*Bride of Lammermoor*," or of Æschylus in the "*Agamemnon*."

I dreamed that night that I was in church, and that everything was prepared for my marriage. We stood before the altar, and the clergyman opened the book for the marriage service; but as he began, it was the burial service that he read. They stopped him, and he turned the pages; but ever as he began again to read, the same words came to his lips, and the book in his hands grew larger and larger, and the words "For the Burial of the Dead" stood out in bloody letters, and seemed to rise from the page. I looked up into the clergyman's face, and that was changing too. I had seen those features before; but I knew them not till the thin lips moved, and said—"Julia's murderer—Julia's murderer!" And then the book and the altar were gone, and a coffin stood in its place; and the same voice said, "Open it!" and the lid rose, and there was a corpse in its shroud. It lifted itself up slowly, and I could not see the face; but I cried out in terror, "Who is it?" and the grave clothes fell—it was Alice! I closed my eyes and shrieked; and the same voice said, "Look again, look again!" I looked and it was Edward. Over and over again, during that night, I awoke in speechless terror; and when I went to sleep again the same dream, with slight variations, haunted me anew.

The appointed day arrives, and the marriage rite is celebrated, not without the apparition of Mrs. Tracy; but she quails before the glance of Lovell, from whom also a groan proceeds as the bride is given away. A short fit of illness produces exhaustion to the overwrought spirits of Ellen, the main condition of repose; and there follows a single week of ecstasy, which is described in contrast with the agony to follow, at the opening of the third volume, in a passage of remarkable beauty, with which want of space alone forbids us to adorn these pages. That dreamy period is cut short by Edward's election as a member for his county, upon a casual vacancy, at which she is displayed as his lovely bride, and rendered miserable by menaces of exposure, to her but too intelligible. In broken phrases she had spoken to him of remorse and self-reproach; but all this he treats as mere sickly sentiment, and sternly forbidding her to tamper with reality and sincerity, by trifling upon matters of such weight, he effectually seals her lips to him, and cuts off that hope of

relieving her burdened breast, which the ever-growing tenderness and confidence that form the natural law of married life should have afforded.

But in proportion as Ellen was now by her marriage more entirely removed from the scope of all pure and true love on the part of Henry, does he become resolute and violent in his measures for retaining his place in her society, and for making it known and felt that he stands in relations of confidence towards her. By his comprehension of a woman's nature, and, in particular, of that remarkable woman with whom he had to deal, he alternately touches her sympathies and alarms her terrors, and makes each act of his interposition subservient to the great purpose of rivetting his grasp upon her mind, of deepening upon the minds of others the impression that he sways her, and of making his wild attachment a reality, at least to the rest of the world, though she remains impenetrable, and, when she dares, indignant at his avowals. But her indignation is ever followed by the lassitude of that leisure to which the close engagements of her husband in politics give occasion, and that lassitude demands the stimulus which his conversation affords. He even uses to her the threat he had applied to the old woman Tracy; he declares he will desert his innocent and saintly wife, now on the eve of her confinement, whom Ellen had never ceased to love (for amidst her wanderings she at no time lost the faculty of appreciating excellence), unless she undertakes, at least, to "respect his feelings;" and in another of her fatal hours she writes: "Do not go, I implore you. I forgive and will bear with you." And Alice becomes so far alive to this strange intimacy, that her mind bursts its former boundaries; she is impelled to read and learn more of the life of the society in which she finds her own lot is cast; she remains incorrupt, but her spirit is no longer the unclouded region, which evil thoughts have never so much as traversed; the character of her self-consciousness is modified, "in the expression of her coun-

tenance what once was peace had become composure; and in her character what had been only simplicity had become reserve."

All the substance of love between Edward and Ellen remains; but he sternly notices the shortcomings and inconsistencies by which his wife falls below the ideal he had framed, and his nature does not well brook submission to that law which brings the dreams of life down to its realities; while on her part, the sentiment of fear, though it never generates the smallest degree of even momentary aversion, yet checks the free current of her fondness. But by degrees his suspicions are aroused: not by Lovell's device, but through the intermediation of Mr. Estcourt, the genuine villain of the tale, that is to say, a thorough-paced man of the world, armed at all points offensively and defensively in hardened self-love. A drive with Lovell, accidental on her part, which accident also prevented her from naming to her husband at the proper moment, brings these apprehensions nearly to a crisis; but Edward is summoned away to visit their uncle, Mr. Middleton, who had gone to travel abroad, in a very dangerous illness; and he leaves her, after an agitated conversation, with an embrace, in which strong mistrust was stifled by stronger love. He writes to her a letter of bitter reproach, interpreting what arose from her dependence upon Henry and fear of his power into the clear signs of guilty passion; he absolutely forbids her to explain her conduct; enjoins the total abandonment of intercourse with Henry, and commends her to penitence and hope. The notes which she had written to Lovell with objects totally different, have been stolen from him and forwarded to Edward, and are now enclosed in his letter. The evidence against her, as she says, was to an ordinary mind overpowering; but she is represented with admirable truth as suffering less inconsolably when her love, which has remained "pure, sacred, and entire," was thus wrongfully impeached, than when the necessities of her condition seemed to compel her to

live a life of falsehood. Hope flashes upon her in the idea of confession ; but she recoils at the thought of her oath to Lovell, never to confess to her husband. Bewildered with remorse in so many forms, she does not dare to add another spectre to the crowd that haunt her conscience. But she buries herself in entire solitude, in order that, according to his command, she may avoid seeing Lovell ; and she endeavours to obtain by letter a release from her engagement. No answer comes. Meanwhile Alice, not yet recovered from her confinement, asks Ellen to visit her ; and with earnestness, but not bitterness, upbraids her as the enchantress who absorbs her husband.

I hid my face in my hands, overcome by the force of Alice's words, and unable to meet the searching power of her glance. There was a long deep silence between us, and then I rose to go, and said to her as I did so, with my eyes fixed on the ground, " You pray for your enemies—pray for me. You pray for those who suffer in body and in mind—pray for me. You may never learn how right and how wrong you have been to-day ; but you cannot be wrong in praying to God for me, for He has vexed me with all His storms, all His waves have gone over me, and I am well-nigh overwhelmed. My only hope is in the mercy of one who has never yet showed mercy either to you or to me."

I left her, and never again have I seen that angel face, that pale and blighted form, or heard the accents of her low and solemn voice ; but if there is a saint who pleads for me on earth, or an angel who intercedes for me in Heaven, it is she whose life I have blighted, and whose heart I have broken.

Presently she is apprised of her uncle's death, and of her husband's immediately approaching return. While she holds the letters in her hand, Henry, having at length obtained admission to her house, enters the room. She rouses her lion spirit, declares that they must part, and defies his vengeance, and then, as he begins to bend beneath her force, she falls on her knees to complete the work of overcoming him. The demon of his pride reacts, and he grows hardened in the exultation of

seeing his idol at his feet. She pleads more and more earnestly for release from her rash vow. Edward opens the door, and, horror-struck, without a word quits his house, and a short note apprises her that they have parted for ever—that he will never see her again, or hear her name pronounced. She recoils with loathing from a proposal of Henry Lovell, who has fulfilled his threat of deserting his wife and writes to Ellen in frenzied ecstasy, pointing to the accomplishment of his always lawless and now accursed passion; but racked already by the protracted inward agony of her conscience, smitten on all sides by the message of death, by the upbraiding of Alice, by the tyranny of Henry, and finally stunned by the final and gigantic stroke of her husband's iron sentence, in the wild hopelessness of sorrow, she flies from her home, and as a nameless traveller makes her way to the city, where at first we found her, where she seeks a shelter, of which the perfect obscurity constitutes to her, not indeed a charm, but a recommendation, and where she resolves to exhaust the remainder of a life whose sword has been too sharp for the scabbard, and whose flame she found was now wasting fast away. Thus the proud spirit finally abandons the conflict it had so long sustained; but the blow that crushes heart and hope is severe, in proportion to the tension and to the duration of the previous resistance, and it only remains to her to hide from shame the sorrow that, until she has found the secret of heavenly peace, she cannot cure. Thus it is that youth, beauty, and genius, acute susceptibility, ardent imagination, profound and concentrated powers of affection, can do nothing for the progress, nothing for the bliss, of a human being, without the central support of a heavenly purpose, but waste the odour of their blossoms on the passing winds, and then shed on the common earth beneath them their blasted and untimely fruit. And well and truly does she know that the spirit that is dislodged from the palaces of this world has not therefore found a home with God; she has indeed allayed the pitiless beating of

the storm, she lays the spirits of evil that torment her, she vaguely soothes the paroxysm of pain by the "awful silence" of the cathedral, and the "low chanting of the choir;" but still, as she recounts, "The curse of Cain follows, and his words of complaint are ever on my lips: 'My punishment is greater than I can bear.'"

The day, however, came of confession and of peace. Lovell vindicated the reality of his frightful passion: he was seized with a fever that attacked the brain and put a period to his life; but not until by a great effort he had collected his powers to put upon record, as the testimony of a dying man, Ellen's innocence of the imputed crime, and her constant repulsion of his passion: nor until in that calm—the calm of exhaustion alone, which intervened between delirium and death, he had intimated to his wife that his heart was touched with the thought of the Redeemer, and had so marked with a faint and weak ray of hope the pathway of his descent into the grave.

With the greatest difficulty, Mr. Lacy, as the bearer of Ellen's confession and of Lovell's testimony, makes his way into Edward's presence, and forces him to hear the assertion of her innocence. And now Edward himself is torn by the violence of contending feelings, yet his rigid soul does not wholly relent until he hears the next day that Lovell is dead. He then repairs to the place of his wife's abode, and brings her home. His affections are restored to her, but his earthly hopes can bloom no more. Her spirit has been too deeply racked and torn to recover its tone in this life, or by any change less than that which ushers in the new life of eternity. The restored flow of fondness seems for a time to revive her, but the reaction is only of a moment: having, however, resolved to purge her breast, she pursues that purpose with a noble energy; she makes the confession before those she loves, which she had already imparted to Mr. Lacy, and then sinks into a tranquil death. But we can do no justice to the exquisite beauty of these closing scenes: to

their profound and moving tenderness as a delineation of human affection, and to the fidelity with which they represent the soothing and hallowing power of the ordinances of Christ upon the smitten and humble spirit.

We have devoted many words to giving what is, after all, a most contracted and imperfect sketch of this remarkable book. For it is, after all, a book that to be appreciated must be known in its details, in its eloquence and pathos, in the delicacy and fulness of its delineations of passion, in its always powerful and, we think, generally true handling of human action and motive, grounded, not upon analysis, but upon that intuition which, as applied to character, seems to be especially and almost exclusively the possession of the mind of woman ; in the healthfulness of moral principle that sustains it, in the singleness of idea and purpose that pervades it from first to last. It is unnecessary, perhaps, to add the meaner praise of fidelity in the picture of social life, and its varied, we might rather say variegated, movements. And yet this too was obviously requisite in order to produce the general effect. But it is a rare treasure to find the mastery of all human gifts of authorship so happily combined with a clear and full apprehension of that undying faith in its Catholic integrity by which the human race must ultimately stand or fall.

There are indeed, perhaps, places where exception may be taken to the precise form of expression which has been adopted ; as for example, in the very beautiful passage where Ellen refers to her who loved much because she had been forgiven much, and imagines her surrender of all things to follow the Redeemer, and its being said to her "Do this, and be forgiven"; we think that on reconsideration the authoress would see that the expression is a hazardous one, and seems to invert the order in which the grace of pardon and the grace of holy service are conferred upon men ; and of the prototype of Christian penitence whom she cites it is recorded not that she loved much and therefore was

forgiven much, but that she was forgiven much and therefore loved much. But it is not our part to teach one whom in this work we gladly recognise as a teacher, and who, as we believe, has taught to one more and to another less, but something to all her readers.

We are, however, tempted to notice what appears to us a two-fold incongruity in the matter of the unhappy oath, upon which turns finally the arrival of the catastrophe. It is hardly consistent with the power of Ellen's mind, that she should not have seen how entirely it lay in her own discretion to release herself from an obligation evidently sinful, in which no other person but herself had a right to claim an interest. Had the question concerned the revelation of a crime of Lovell's, it would, of course, have stood differently. Nor do we think sufficient ground is shown for her original submission to that oath, to bring it into keeping with the general story. For Henry Lovell, in point of fact, offers her nothing in return for so extraordinary a demand: and these powerful spirits are too equally matched in conflict, to allow anything in the nature of abject concession from the one to the other, without violating the idea of their characters and general position. But we will resume our general view.

A narrative can scarcely be otherwise than moving, in which we see the blossom of rare promise nipped before it reaches maturity; every such tale may in some sense be thought to have its moral, as it must convey a lesson of the vanity of human things. But how small, how elementary a doctrine, what a mere fragment of the truth ordained for man's recovery, is that which seems to be the climax and consummation of some of the prevailing systems of morality. To land, after life's bitter experience, in this vacancy and desolation, is not the destiny appointed for us; to fold our arms in what is called resignation, which often means no more than not preventing what we are not able to prevent; to begin to learn that our devices are vain, when the very best of their whole series is

shattered to atoms, and to make the discovery that we cannot lay hold on happiness, at the time when it has far and utterly escaped from our grasp; all this is but a sorry tale, and one would say not well worth the telling. It is piteous, indeed, to see the flowers of hope, be they what they may, ruthlessly cut away, and compassion may be stirred by the narrative; but what avails the raising of barren emotions which lead to no genuine effort, to no healthy result, which, on the contrary, rather inflate the mind with a conceit of imaginary virtues, and at the same time debilitate it for the work of acquiring them?

There is, however, a class of works of a higher order, in which, though they may not lead us, or may only lead us by some forced and sudden turn (and one therefore not well serving for example) to Him Who is our home—some heart of high capacity for weal or woe, having conceived a profound sentiment of love, and having so fed that passion as to absorb into it all its strength and substance, then when it has been shipwrecked droops and dies along with it. Such is the love of Lucy Ashton for the Master of Ravenswood; such, too, although, we apprehend, drawn with less fidelity to general nature, is the love of Corinne for Oswald. What tears up the plant, tears up the soil along with it; the cords that have vibrated intensely to a master-note remain, when that sound ceases, silent for ever. These are not mere flat recitals of the doctrine of the vanity of the world. They teach us a great lesson of our nature: its capacity of projecting itself from itself, for finding the end of life in another and not in that middle point of self, where sin has placed it, and where more sin would irrevocably fix it. Whatever is devoted, whatever teaches that our nature finds its best and highest law of being beyond the narrow bounds of our own individuality, does at least advance us by one stage from earth towards Heaven, and leaves us only further to learn Who it is that claims to be, and is, the truest, the noblest, and the most ennobling object of our affections.

But undoubtedly it is the first end of all serious fiction to lead us to the same only point whither other forms of true teaching should conduct us. Let us not suppose, because the dislocated faculties of man deviate from their appointed sphere of operation, that there is, therefore, a real discrepancy between them, or that they are not all fellow-workers, though in different modes and classes, yet ever in the same wide field of truth, and for the purpose of contributing to the same great work of human restoration. This, and nothing less than this, is the aim of the production now before us. It makes us watch with sorrow the freewill of a creature nobly formed, weaving for herself, by a process which at length has almost the certainty of mechanism, the toils in which she is afterwards, in despite of her best efforts, to be held captive as a mark for the huntsman ; and it is in the work of her own unhappy hands that, at length, her feet are set so fast that she cannot get forth. It makes us learn, and learn with pungency, how unconfessed and unrepented sin, borne about within the bosom, stifles its seeds of life, thickens its inward atmosphere, changes into darkness that which was its light. To whom of us all is not this a lesson ? Where is the happy being into all the chambers of whose soul the light of day continually and freely flows, who has no " blank misgivings " of deceit towards others, of fraud upon himself ? Who does not feel he has spread a film over the eye planted in him for self-knowledge ? who instinctively refuses lodgment to a sin, and expels it by confession, even as he would drive a scorpion from his breast ? To some, again, we say, the voice of this work will be a piercing one ; but to all, we believe, it must be audible.

And this reminds us of a frivolous objection : it has been somewhere surmised, as of most other things in this day of reckless fancies, that if the representations of this book be just, we ought to return to the Church of Rome. No ! but if they be just, then, indeed, we ought to return to the Church of England. We ought to remember her solemn admonitions of

repentance ; her constant witness in favour of holy discipline for the souls of her children ; the heavy responsibility in self-examination and self-judgment which she throws upon them, the means of authoritative support, of consolation ever divine, though ministered through the weakness and foolishness of a fleshly organ, to which she habitually points the way as their meet refuge, if they shall not of themselves suffice to the discharge of that awful duty. Yes, we have, as a nation and as individuals, a long and weary path to traverse before we attain to the level of that practice which the injunctions of our own yet living and speaking mother requires. When we have reached it, we may find we have passed by the point to which belongs the system of auricular confession ; that it is at the very best but a particular form of a far broader Christian duty, and that it has fatally altered its character when it becomes a perfunctory and technical substitution for that work of self-government which no man can perform for another, while, so few, alas ! will perform it for themselves ; or when it makes the priest the proper and sole depository of sins, which duty required to be more specially confided to persons immediately affected by them. For example, in the case of Ellen Middleton, it was clearly her part to have made known her agency in the death of Julia to the parents of the child ; and we are persuaded that the great battle now to be fought with the pride and self-will and false shame that reign within us, is not upon the question to what person confession should be made, but upon this other and anterior question, whether confession has a legitimate and regular place at all in the Christian duty of repentance ; or whether general words addressed to a God Whose presence, perhaps, we have never realised, and in Whose eye we too rarely and too weakly feel the painfulness of shame, form the entire and sufficient exercise of the Christian soul in this portion of its training for eternity ?

Again, some, we understand, complain of the improbability of

the concealment which is the fountain-head of Ellen's misfortunes. Now we do not stop to inquire whether such a circumstance has or has not occurred in actual life, because that would be joining an irrelevant issue. The term probability, as applied to works of the imagination, is a very defective one, for its signification, when so used, is something very different from its proper sense, which we take to be, pretty nearly, the result of the mathematical doctrine of chances. But we ask those who are startled by this objection, to watch minutely the course of the narration, and then to state at what point it is that, according to their notion of probability, the authoress ought to have made Ellen Middleton inform against herself. We make this demand because where weighty results that have arisen from small beginnings are regarded in the gross they look improbable ; but when we examine the detail we find each part is in keeping with fundamental laws, and therefore the whole is so likewise. Just as many great works of architecture may look airy and insecure to the distant spectator, while those who have investigated the parts of the structure, and successively considered their relations, will know them to be otherwise. And we have not yet heard a case in any manner made good, to show that there is a serious flaw in the moral continuity of Ellen Middleton's conduct, or consequently to impeach the results to which it leads; to impeach them, of course, we mean as regards their due subordination to the law of probability. But if this be so, then the circumstances that we are startled by mentally, comparing the minuteness of the original cause with the magnitude of the final effect, may be rather in the nature of a presumption in favour of the skill and power of the work, than of proof against it.

Again, it has been said that the characters of the book are unamiable : that Edward is too stern and hard ; that Alice is too still ; that Ellen repels more than she attracts. But it is no reproach to the painter if, instead of daubing his canvas with masses of colour, cold and warm, in violent contrast, he follows

Nature in the inexplicable blending of her myriad shades. Alas ! the ancient legend of those two caskets upon the floor of the palace of Jove—the one full of evils only, the other of plagues mixed with blessings : how sadly and truly does it correspond with the actual picture of the human heart at large. What deep, and to human eyes unrelieved, shadows of evils in the bad ! What strange irregularities ; what latent corruption of motive ; even where acts are laudable, what fearful conflicts of antagonistic principles in those wrought from the better clay, and what alternations in the prospect of their final issue ! That deceit and pride, as well as anger, can dwell in breasts framed to be capable of the noblest things ; that the most burning love is often fed, not by the fond desire to grow to and assimilate what is love-worthy, but by the lust of power and exorbitance of vanity, ready to turn to tyrannous oppression ; that the very rigour with which virtue is grasped becomes a snare to man, when inflexible judgments are based upon fallible perceptions and imperfect knowledge ; to develop truths like these, that have in varying degrees a close practical relation to the daily lives of us all, is the work of a higher vocation, and of a more accomplished artist, than to deal out vices and excellences wholesale, and, working only by means of the brutal or the heroic, to avoid that intermediate region in which we live and learn. Nor will the readers of “ *Ellen Middleton* ” find that in its pages fascination is cast around the indulgence of morbid tempers, or that the phantoms of goodness are decked out in the praise which belongs to its reality ; but the lines of truth and righteousness are faithfully and severely drawn, and the eternal march of the Divine law of retribution forms the fundamental harmony of the book.

W. E. GLADSTONE.

An Interpretation.

“**W**HERE two or three are gathered in My Name,
There I am in the midst of them,” Love said.
And lo, as from His lips, to what I read
These words of sweet interpretation came :
Where two are joined together by the same
White bond wherewith I and My Church are wed,
With them I dwell, till, when the days have sped,
The third one comes, their first-born, free from blame.

Yea, Christ has many temples in the land
No man has built Him. He will tarry there,
And consecrate a human house of prayer,
Wherever by a father's toil is praised
The Father's Name, and by a mother's hand
The altar of self-sacrifice is raised.

A. PRIESTMAN.

The House that Jack Built.

PART II.

IT was late before Aunt Nancy felt the approach of sleep that night. She turned restlessly from side to side, thinking over Bessie's strange behaviour, and trying to find a solution for it. The appearance of a mystery disturbed all calculations based upon her plain and outspoken experience.

But the habits of years are not easily broken, and sleep, that for more than six decades had been wont to settle over this woman's head as regularly as darkness settled on the earth, began now to dim her senses. She was about losing consciousness, when the vague sense of pain and perplexity which still clung to her mind strengthened and took a new form. It was no longer a woman who laughed bitterly when she should have wept, but a woman sobbing violently, she knew not why.

The sound continued, and before its dreary persistence Aunt Nancy's hovering sleep took flight. She started up and listened, not yet quite recalled to recollection. It was indeed a woman's voice sobbing uncontrollably. For one moment the listener's blood chilled with a superstitious fear; the next she recollected that she was not alone in the house. It was Bessie who mourned. "Rachel weeping for her children, because they were not," the old woman thought pityingly.

Poor Bessie had forgotten how thin the walls were in her old home, and, when the door opened and a tall figure clad in white entered her room, she uttered a cry of affright.

"You poor child! I couldn't stand it to hear you cry so,"

Aunt Nancy said, going to her bedside and bending down to put a caressing arm around her. "Don't cry! Try to remember that you have not lost everything."

"I'm sorry I disturbed you, Aunt Nancy," Bessie said faintly, sinking back on the pillow. "You had better leave me to have it out alone. I don't often get a chance to have a good cry, and you have no idea what a relief it is."

"I know all about it!" Aunt Nancy replied; and her voice, low and deep, had a sound like a tolling bell. "I have seen 'em all go and leave me, one after another, father and mother, brothers and sisters, husband and children, till every earthly hope was covered over with dust, and it seemed as though there was dust on the very bread I ate. Yes, I know what it is better than you, for you have your husband and one child left yet, and I have nothing on earth!"

"I have not!" Bessie cried out passionately, with the jealousy of one whose grief is under-estimated. "John and the boy are further away from me than my dead children are!"

The barrier was down. She had betrayed herself, and must tell the whole, though she might be sorry afterwards for having spoken. Concealment and self-control were no longer possible.

It was a tale too often true, though not so often told. The husband engrossed in business, and missing no home care which the love and duty of his wife could bestow, had forgotten, or did not care, or did not believe, that any return was due from him save a pecuniary support, or that he could be guilty of any sin of omission toward his wife save the omission to provide her with food and shelter.

Perhaps no woman ever saw the heart she had once possessed slipping away from her, without making a mistake in her efforts to retain it. Indifference is her surest means of success, but indifference the loving heart can never affect. As well might flame hope to hide itself, living, in ashes.

The reserve and gravity of wounded feeling, when at length

the husband noticed them, he named sulkiness, and the meanness of the causes to which he ascribed that were felt as an insult. The few timid reproaches and petitions the wife had brought herself to utter he listened to with surprise and annoyance, or with ridicule. Why, what in the world did she want? —to begin their courting days over again? In order to do that, they must first be divorced. What had he done? Had he beaten, or scolded, or starved her? Had he gone gallivanting about with other women? Nonsense! He had his business to attend to. Of course he loved her, but she mustn't bother him.

What reply is possible to such arguments? How small seem all our sweetest human needs when they are put into words, simply because words can never express them! In such a controversy, hard natures have always the advantage over sensitive ones, and seem to triumph by their very inferiority.

Bessie was silent, and her husband thought that she was convinced, and dismissed the subject from his mind. If he observed that she grew pale, he supposed that city air did not agree with her. He missed no home comfort, heard no complaint, and therefore took for granted that all was right. He frequently absented himself from home on business, never asking his wife to accompany him, women being in the way on such occasions, and she seemed satisfied to see nothing beyond her own fireside. He brought home his plans and studies at evening, and when the children's play and caresses disturbed him, their mother took them away and amused them elsewhere. When, later, her little ones asleep, as she sat by her husband silently working, he found that the snip of her scissors and the rattle of her spools fretted him, Bessie said not a word, but went off to bed, to wet her pillow with bitter and unavailing tears, finding no comfort.

The thought of seeking comfort and help in her religion had not once entered her mind. She was dead to its obligations. They had never been impressed on her, and her heart had been engrossed by other interests. Her children had been baptised,

and she usually went to an early Mass on Sunday, but never heard a sermon, and never read a religious book. She prayed often, but it was the outcry of pain, the petition for an earthly good, not the prayer for resignation and wisdom.

Of his wife's real life John Maynard knew no more than he did of life at the Antipodes. His profession engrossed his heart. His happiness was the work and study over polished metals, to fit cylinder, crank, and valve with nicety into their places; and at last, when that exquisite but irresistible power of steam, so delicate in its fineness, yet so terrible in its strength, began to steal into his work, to see the creature of brass and iron grow alive, and become more mighty than an army of giants, how tenderly could he handle, how carefully arrange, how patiently study out the parts of his work! For the problem of that infinitely more exquisite mechanism—his wife's heart—he had no time.

The boy, as boys will, followed in the footsteps of his father. He emulated the slighting of which the father was himself unconscious, and treated his mother with that intolerable mixture of patronising kindness and impatient superiority so often witnessed in the presumptuous children of our time.

When Bessie Maynard had poured out her complaint, with many an illustration of which a woman could well understand the bitterness, Aunt Nancy was silent a moment.

"It's pretty hard, dear," she said then, embarrassed what to say. "Some men have that way of not caring anything about their wives, as soon as they have got them; but I never thought John would act so. And you know, Bessie, that, if it is hard, still he is your husband, and you can't leave him for that. Try to be patient, and don't lose courage. I'm sure he loves you, though he doesn't show it; and he'll come round by-and-by."

The reply almost broke in on this trite advice: "I did not mean to leave him. I came down here to think. I can't think there. I wanted to see again this place where I was a child, and

where I was so happy. I thought that perhaps some of the old feelings might come back. I have been afraid of some things. Aunt Nancy, I was afraid I should grow to hate John!"

"Oh! no, Bessie," the old woman exclaimed. "Never let yourself hate your own husband! It would be a dreadful sin; and, besides, it wouldn't mend matters. It is better for a woman to love one who cares nothing for her than not to love anybody. I don't believe that John is not fond of you still, if he'd only stop to think of it."

There was no reply.

"What else were you afraid of?" Aunt Nancy asked presently. "You said you were afraid of some things?"

Bessie did not answer.

That other fear that, shunned at first, then glanced upon, then brooded over silently till it had grown almost a probability, flashed out again on her in all its original hatefulness when she found herself about to explain it to a listener like this.

"If you don't want to tell, I won't ask you," Aunt Nancy said, with almost childlike timidity. "But, may be, since you have begun, you would feel better not to keep anything back. You know, Bessie, I am on your side, though I am John's own aunt."

The younger woman crept nearer into the arm that half held her, and said, in a hurried whisper, "Everyone is not so indifferent to me as John is!"

"I'm glad of it, child," was the calm reply. "I don't like to praise people to their faces, but you always had a sweet, winning way. I am glad that other people are good to you." She waited again for the explanation, not dreaming that it had been given.

Bessie Maynard drew a breath, like one who plunges into water. "There's someone who thinks me worth watching and sympathising with, if John doesn't," she said.

"You don't mean a man!" exclaimed Aunt Nancy.

"Of course I do," answered Bessie almost pettishly.

The words were scarcely out of her mouth, before she was flung back on to the pillow by the arms that had held her so tenderly, and Aunt Nancy stood erect by the bedside. "Aren't you ashamed of yourself, Bessie Maynard?" she cried out indignantly.

"No, I am not!" was the dogged answer. "I have nothing to be ashamed of."

The flash of the old woman's eyes could be seen in the dim light. "What! you, a married woman, not ashamed to let a man who is not your husband talk love to you!"

"He never spoke a word of love to me," said Bessie, still sulky.

Aunt Nancy was utterly puzzled. "How do you know then?" she asked.

Neither by nature nor education was this woman fitted to understand that subtle manner by which impressions and assurances are conveyed without a word having been spoken. A man would have been obliged to use plain language indeed, if he would have had her, a wife, understand that he loved her.

While Bessie described some of the delicate kindnesses of this dangerous friend of hers, Aunt Nancy listened attentively, and presently resumed her seat by the bed. She really could not see that the child had done, or meant, or wished any real harm.

"But, still, you must look out for the fellow, dear," she said "He wouldn't hang round you so if he was what he ought to be. You never know what these city gentlemen are."

"He isn't a bad man!" Bessie exclaimed. "I won't have him called so. I'm afraid; but, for all that, I respect him. I wish John were half as good."

The story was ended; but with the feeling of relief which followed the disburdening of her heart came also the uneasiness and half regret we always experience when we have been led

unawares to confide a secret to one whom we have not deliberately chosen as a confidant. Conscious of this new uneasiness, Bessie wished to close the conversation.

"Don't let me keep you any longer," she said. "Go to bed now, and forget all the nonsense I have been talking. I am sorry I disturbed you."

Aunt Nancy paid no attention to this request. She sat a few moments in deep thought, then spoke abruptly :

"Bessie, did you ever go to any of your priests about this business?"

"To a priest!" repeated Bessie, astonished at such a question from a rigid Puritan like her aunt, and doubtful in what spirit it was asked. "What made you think of that?"

"I am not a Catholic," the old woman said, "but you are. And I like to see people live up to their religion, whatever it is. A religion that won't help you in a strait like this isn't worth having."

Bessie was silent, knowing not what to say. Her faith was sleeping. That religion would help as really as the trials of earth can hurt she had not thought. Like many others, she invoked the aid of the Church on the great events, the births, the marriages, and the deaths, but let the rest of life fight its own battles.

"Now, you listen to me," Aunt Nancy said earnestly. "I'm not very wise, but I'm going to give you the best advice that you can get anywhere. Just you write to old Father Conners, the priest that married you and John, and tell him what a trouble you are in. I've seen him, and I believe he's a good Christian, if he is a priest, and a sensible man, too. He comes three or four times a year up to a Mr. Blake's, over on the railroad, and says Mass in his house. There are a good many Catholics round there now. It's about time for him to come again. You write to him, and you won't be sorry for it. There's nothing else for you to do. Will you write, Bessie? I want you to promise."

The promise was given hesitatingly, doubtingly, more to get rid of the subject than from any conviction of its wisdom.

But a promise is a promise, and next morning Bessie wrote the letter, not because she wished to, but because she must; and a very dry, cold letter it was. She was a little helped in the writing of it by the pleasant prospect of carrying it to the mail. That would give her a long, solitary walk and a whole afternoon quite to herself; for the post office was in a desk, in a corner of the sitting-room of a farmhouse four miles distant. This house was at the end of postal and stage accommodations in that direction. Three times a week a double-seated open wagon was driven there from a seaport town thirty miles to the southward, passing through several small villages on its way. This stage had brought Bessie up, and was to return the next morning.

She set out on her walk soon after their early dinner, and reached the post office just at the high tide of that country afternoon leisure when, their noon dinner quite cleared away, the women of the house are ordinarily free from everything that they would call labour. At this time the housewife smooths her hair and ties on a clean apron. One hears the snap of knitting-needles through the silence, or the drowsy hum of the spinning-wheel, or the sound of the loom where the deep-blue woollen web grows, thread by thread, while the weaver tosses her shuttle to and fro.

Bessie had dreaded the gossip which she must expect to encounter; but, as she approached, the sight of blue and pink sun-bonnets out in the field, where the women were raking hay, relieved her fear. Not a soul was in the house. The watchdog, recollecting her, gave no alarm, only walked gravely by her side, and looked on while she slipped her letter into the bag left to receive the mail. All the doors and windows stood open, and the sunshine lay bright and clear on the white bare floors. Large, stupid flies bumped their heads against the panes of

glass, and a bumble-bee flew in at the front door, wandered noisily about the rooms, and out again by the back door. The painted wooden chairs stood straightly against the yellow-washed walls, and a large rocking-chair, with a chintz cushion, occupied one corner. A braided cloth mat covered the hearth, and the fireplace was filled with cedar boughs, through which glittered the brass andirons. On the high mantelpiece stood a pair of brass candlesticks, and a tumbler filled with wild roses.

Bessie glanced hurriedly about, then stole out, trembling lest she should be discovered and pounced upon by some loud-voiced man or woman from whom escape would be impossible. But no one appeared, and in a few minutes she was out of sight of the house.

Loud would be their exclamations of wonder and regret when they should discover that letter, knowing who must have brought it. How curiously would they handle it over, and examine it, while they speculated and guessed concerning its contents!

"One comfort," said Bessie to herself, as she glanced over her shoulder, and saw the last sun-bonnet disappear, "I sealed it so that not even a particle of air could get in; and they can't see a word without committing felony."

The June day was passing away in a soft glory. All the world was green, all the sky was blue, and all the air was golden. But the green was so various, from a verdant blackness, through many tints, to a vivid green that was almost yellow, it seemed many-coloured as it was many-shaped. There was every shape and size, from the graceful plume of ferns to the square-topped oak with its sturdy, horizontal branches. Through it all wound the narrow brown road, with a line of grass in the middle between the wagon-wheels where the horses' feet spared it. The birds were singing their evening song, and a brook at the road-side lisped faintly here and there, then lay still and shone, then suddenly laughed outright.

On such an evening one does long to be happy ; and, if happy, then one feels that it is not enough. Bessie walked on slowly, taking long breaths of the clear, perfumed air that had now an evening coolness. She would fain have stayed out till night fell. The house was near, so she stepped aside, sat down on a mossy rock, and looked at the sunset. The last thin, shining cloud there melted in the fervid light, grew faint, and disappeared. Bessie's eyes, so tearful that all this universe of green and gold swam before them, were fixed on the sky, and she thought over, with a clearer mind now, the last feverish, miserable years of her life.

It seemed to her that, if she had been less exclusively devoted to her husband, and had interested herself in other people and in the events of the day, she would have been wiser and happier. She had made herself as a slave, and had received a slave's portion. It would be better to stand on a more equal footing, and, since works of supererogation, instead of winning his gratitude and affection, only fostered his selfishness and lowered her to confine herself to the duties she was bound to perform.

"But it is my nature to love something with my whole strength, so that all else seems small in comparison," she said, sighing. "How can I help it?"

While she gazed fixedly at the sky, at first without seeing, she presently became aware of a red-gold crescent moon that had grown visible under her eyes, curved like a bow when the arrow is just singing from the string, like the new moon whereon Our Lady stands, a tower of ivory.

The tears in Bessie's eyes made the shining curve tremble in the sky as though a hand held it ; and, as though it were a bent bow, an arrowy thought flew from it, and struck quivering into her heart :

"Love God, and all will be well !"

She sat a minute longer, then rose and went quietly homeward. Aunt Nancy would be anxious about her ; and the desire

for solitude was gone. She was glad now that she had written to Father Conners, though the letter might have shown a gentler spirit. It was a comfort to have done something that was right, though it was not much.

One does not ordinarily become pious in a moment. We may recognise the voice of God, and be startled at the clearness and suddenness of the summons, but our sluggish faith has ever an excuse for a little more folding of the hands to sleep.

But though not obedient at once, Bessie Maynard felt, rather than saw, that there was a refuge which made it no longer possible for her to despair.

Within a few days she received an answer to her letter. The priest was coming to that neighbourhood at the end of the week, and would see her. The letter was brief and to the point, and contained not one word of sympathy or exhortation; but the tremulous characters, that told of age or infirmity, touched the heart of the reader. This old man gave her no soft words, but he was hastening to her relief. For the first time she anxiously asked herself if it had not been possible for her to avoid all her trouble, and if there was any element in her story which could reasonably be expected to call forth anything but reproof for herself from a man whose whole life had been one of charity and self-denial. She wished to see him, indeed, but she awaited his coming with a feeling little short of terror.

Bessie had not written to her husband. She could not bring herself to do that, for she did not wish to write coldly to him, and she would not use expressions of affection which had no echo in her heart. But she wrote to her son a gentle and tender letter, of which he was neither old nor sensitive enough to feel the pathos. Only one reproach found a place there: "I thought you might like to hear from me, though you cared more for your play than you did to say good-bye to me when I came here, and left me to go to the station alone." She did not intimate, though she thought, that the business which had called

her husband away at the same time might as easily have been postponed.

Father Conners came. His open buggy was driven to the door one morning, and the boy who sat with him held the horse while the priest slowly alighted. He was a large, powerful-looking man, still vigorous, though slightly bent and stiff with age. Snow-white hair framed his expressive face, in which sternness and benevolence were strangely mingled. His colour was fresh, perfect teeth gave a brilliancy to his infrequent smile, and his pale-blue eyes were almost too penetrating to be met with ease. He walked with his head slightly bent down and his gaze fixed upon the ground till he reached the door, then looked up to see Bessie standing on the threshold.

She was a pretty creature still, in spite of troubled years, and her manner and expression would have propitiated a sterner judge. Blushes overspread her face, and she trembled; yet an impulse of joyful welcome broke through and brightened her, as a sunbeam brightens the cloud.

The priest stopped short, with no ceremony of greeting, and regarded her a moment, while she waited for him to speak.

The scrutiny satisfied him apparently.

"You did well to come back here," he said then, and made a motion to enter. She stood aside for him to pass, and followed him into the little parlour which she had spent all the morning in preparing for him. An armchair had been improvised out of a barrel, some pillows, and a shawl, the rude fireplace was filled with green, and there were dishes of flowers about.

Her visitor did not appear to notice these simple efforts to do him honour. Almost before seating himself, he began to speak of what had brought him there.

"Now, my child, though I have time enough to say and hear all that is necessary, if it should take a week, I have no time to waste. Tell me the meaning of your letter."

No time for gradual approach, for timid intimations, or delicate reserves till, warming with the subject, she could show plainly all that was in her heart. She must make the "epic plunge" without delay. Stimulated by the necessity, Bessie called up her wits and her courage, and without being aware of it, told everything in a few words.

When she paused and expected him to question her, to her surprise he seemed already to know the whole. And, to her still greater pleasure, those points on which she had touched lightly, fearing that they might seem trivial in his eyes, he spoke of with sympathy.

"It is those little attentions and kindnesses which sweeten human life, my child, and help to sustain us under its heavier trials," he said.

Bessie lifted her grateful, tearful eyes, and thanked him with a sad smile.

"And now," he continued, "I want you to go to confession."

Her eyes dilated with astonishment. She was confused and distressed, and a painful blush rose to her face.

"I have not confessed for years," she stammered. "I am not prepared. When I have time to think I will go to confession in a church. It seems strange to confess here."

The priest was by nature and habits peremptory, and he knew that this was the proper time to exercise that quality. "Any place is proper for confession, if a better one is not to be had," he said. "As to being prepared, let us see. You tell me that you have been thinking this all over this week, to see wherein you may have done wrong. There, then, is an examination of your conscience as to your duties toward your husband, and, indirectly, toward God. You say that you have not practised your religion, but mean to do so in future. There is attrition, at least, and a purpose of amendment. You say that you know all you have committed of serious wrong in these years, don't you?"

"Yes," was the answer.

"You know humanly, as far as you can know, without the illumination of the Holy Spirit?" the priest corrected.

"Yes," said Bessie again. "But I want to think it over, and make sure of my sorrow and good resolutions."

"In short you wish to reform and convert yourself, then go to God," said Father Conners. "That is not the way. It is God Who is to convert you. You need not stay to try to conquer your feelings, and hesitate for fear you may not be able to do so. Your reason is convinced. It is enough. Go to God, and ask Him to help you do the rest. While you are thinking the subject over in the woods here, you may die, or the devil may come and tempt you in the shape of this friend of yours. I will give you half-an-hour. While I have gone out to read my office under the trees, you kneel down here, and first ask the Holy Spirit to enlighten you and reveal all your sins. Then say, and mean, that you are sorry, and plan how you may do better with God's help in the future."

He had risen while speaking, and was going towards the door. Refusal was impossible. Bessie carried her shawl-covered arm-chair out, and set it under a thick old pine-tree on the slippery brown pine-needles through which tiny ants were running in every direction, very busy about some buildings of their own, carrying sticks larger than themselves.

Father Conners seated himself, set his hat on the ground by his side, and took out his Breviary. He had but little time to attend to the beauties of Nature, but the situation brought an expression of pleasure to his face. He gave one glance up into the overshadowing branches that spread their fragrant screen between him and the sun, then a kindlier glance to the young woman who stood looking wistfully at him.

"Come here for your confession when you are ready, child," he said, "and don't be afraid. See how peaceful the skies are. Is God less gentle? And here! take my watch, and come back in twenty-five minutes. You have lost five minutes already."

Bessie took the large silver watch on its black ribbon, and hastened to shut herself in her room, and Father Conners became absorbed in his office. So much absorbed was he, he did not observe that a large spider let itself down by a thread from the tree above, stopped within a few inches of that silvery hair, which it contemplated curiously, then ran up its silken ladder again as a young woman came out of the house, walked with faltering steps across the sward, and sank on her knees by the priest's side.

An hour later, Father Conners climbed laboriously into his carriage, and drove away, and Bessie leaned on the bars, and watched him as long as he was in sight. She felt strong and peaceful. She counted over the promises she had made him, and resolved anew that they should be kept.

She stood there so long that Aunt Nancy, after having kept her dinner waiting out of all reason, came down to speak to her. She came with anxiety and hesitation, not knowing whether her niece was better or worse for this visit.

"You gave me good advice, Aunt Nancy," Bessie said, turning at the sound of her step.

The old lady was delighted. "So you're all right?" she said.

"I have got into the right track, at least," Bessie answered, as they walked up toward the house. "I have been to confession."

Aunt Nancy's face clouded again on hearing this avowal. That was all the priest's visit had amounted to, then—that John's wife had been induced to go to confession! How could people be so superstitious, so subjected to their priests? She had hoped that Bessie might have received some good sound advice and instruction.

This she thought, but said nothing.

How was she to know that in that one word confession was included advice, instruction, good resolution, and sorrow for sin, as well as the mystical rite which she abhorred?

M. A. TINCKER.

(To be continued.)

Nature's Immortality.

IN the days when days were fable, before the grim Tartar fled from Cathay, or the hardy Goth from the shafted Tartar; before the hardy Goth rolled on the hot Kelt, or the hot Kelt on Italy; before the wolf-cubs lolled tongues of prey, or Rhodian galleys sheered the brine, an isle there was which has passed into the dreams of men, itself

Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing.

And when the Muses talked, they named it Sicily. Was it, and is it not? Alas! where's Eden, or Taprobane?

Where flows Alpheus now? You take a map (great Poetry! have they mapped Heaven?) and show me—what? The dust-heap of Italy; a thing spurned contemptuously from the toe of the Ausonian mainland; you point to it, you man of knowledge, and this, you say, is Sicily. You may be right, I know not; but it is not Sicily to me. Yet that olden Sicily could not, cannot pass. Dew but your eyes with the euphrasy of fancy, and purge your ears with the poet's singing; then, to the ear within the ear, and the eye within the eye, shall come the green of the ever-vernal forests, the babble of the imperishable streams. For within this life of ache and dread, like the greenness in the rain, like the solace in the tear, we may have each of us a dreamful Sicily. And since we can project it where we will, for me, seeking those same

Sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing,
for me, perchance, Sicily may be Little Cloddington.

What balm, then, for hurt minds has my Sicily? In the old Sicily "Shepherds piped on oaten straws," and the inhabitants

were entirely worthy of their surroundings. But that cultivating influence of beauty which our æsthetes preach has somehow broken down in the case of Little Cloddington, and one begins to have an uneasy suspicion that the constant imbibing of beauty, like the constant imbibing of wine, dulls the brain which it is supposed to stimulate. Little Cloddington is islanded alike from the good and ill of knowledge. The local idea of geography is that Little Cloddington revolves on its own axis once every twenty-four hours. This, I confess, appears to me a dubious notion. Personally, I believe that it would take Little Cloddington at least a year to revolve on anything. The average agricultural labourer seems to be sprung from the illicit union of a mowing-machine and a turnip. From the mowing-machine he inherits his capacity for making hay, from the turnip his attachment to the soil and his capacity for imbibing moisture. His very affections are strong only as the roots of a vegetable are strong; they have no vividness. Compared with the town-dweller, he is unquestionably innocent—innocent of everything. If this were the condition of man before the Fall—O! maligned Eve, blessings on thee! Without the admirable foresight of our First Mother, we should have been exceedingly good, doubtless; but how uncommonly stupid we should have been! It was Mark Twain who expressed his disappointment with the *grisettes* of Paris, whom Parisian novelists represented as beautiful, and as distinctly immoral. The disgusted humorist made very unchivalrous remarks about the *grisettes'* beauty, and declared that it would be gross flattery to say they were immoral. Mark's jest is fiction founded on fact. The cow is a most respectable, orderly, docile, and inoffensive animal; yet, since the days of Isis, no man has honoured the cow. Now, there are human beings who possess a cow-like virtue, who pass their existences doing very little harm to anyone, and very little good. They are turned into life as into a pasture, and when their time comes they are turned out again. That is all.

Let us quit man, then, for Nature. To commune with the heart of Nature—this has been the accredited mode since the days of Wordsworth. Nature, Coleridge assures us, has ministrations by which she heals her erring and distempered child ; and it is notorious how effectual were her ministrations in the case of Coleridge. Well, she is a very lovely Nature in this Sicily of mine ; yet I confess a heinous doubt whether rustic stolidity may not after all be a secret effluence from her. You speak, and you think she answers you. It is the echo of your own voice. You think you hear the throbbing of her heart, and it is the throbbing of your own. I do not believe that Nature has a heart ; and I suspect that, like many another beauty, she has been credited with a heart because of her face. You go to her, this great, beautiful, tranquil, self-satisfied Nature, and you look for—sympathy? Yes ; the sympathy of a cat, sitting by the fire and blinking at you. What, indeed, does she want with a heart or brain? She knows that she is beautiful, and she is placidly content with the knowledge ; she was made to be gazed on, and she fulfils the end of her creation. After a careful anatomisation of Nature, I pronounce that she has nothing more than a lymphatic-vesicle. She cannot give what she does not need ; and if we were but similarly organised, we should be independent of sympathy. We should all, in fact, be better if we had a forcing-pump instead of a heart. It is too frail a thing for working-days. The animal which enjoys the earthly *summum bonum* is unquestionably the pig ; yet even the pig would be more perfect if it were without a heart. A man cannot go straight to his objects, because he has a heart ; he cannot eat, drink, sleep, make money, and be satisfied, because he has a heart. It is a mischievous thing, and wise men accordingly take the earliest opportunity of giving it away.

Yet the thing is after all too deep for jest. What is this heart of Nature, if it exist at all? Is it, according to the conventional

doctrine derived from Wordsworth and Shelley, a heart of love, according with the heart of man, and stealing out to him through a thousand avenues of mute sympathy? No; in this sense I repeat seriously what I said lightly: Nature has no heart. I sit now, alone and melancholy, with that melancholy which comes to all of us when the waters of sad knowledge have left their ineffaceable delta in the soul. As I write, a calm, faint-tinted evening sky sinks like a nestward bird to its sleep. At a little distance is a dark wall of fir-wood; while close at hand a small group of larches rise like funeral plumes against that tranquil sky, and seem to say, "Night cometh." They alone are in harmony with me. All else speaks to me of a beautiful, peaceful world in which I have no part. And did I go up to yonder hill, and behold at my feet the spacious amphitheatre of hill-girt wood and mead, overhead the mighty ærial *velarium*, I should feel that my human sadness was a higher and deeper and wider thing than all. O Titan Nature! a petty race, which has dwarfed its spirit in dwellings, and bounded it in selfish shallows of art, may find you too vast, may shrink from you into its earths: but though you be a very large thing, and my heart a very little thing, yet Titan as you are, my heart is too great for you. Coleridge speaking, not as Wordsworth had taught him to speak, but from his own bitter experience, said the truth:

O Lady, we receive but what we give,
And in our life alone doth Nature live;
Ours is her wedding garment, ours her shroud!

* * * * *

I may not hope from outward forms to win
The glory and the joy whose fountains are within.

The truth, in relation to ourselves; though not the truth with regard to Nature absolutely. Absolute Nature lives not in our life, nor yet is lifeless, but lives in the life of God: and in so far, and so far merely, as man himself lives in that life, does he come into sympathy with Nature, and Nature with him. She is

God's daughter, who stretches her hand only to her Father's friends. Not Shelley, not Wordsworth himself, ever drew so close to the heart of Nature as did the Seraph of Assisi, who was close to the Heart of God.

Yet higher, yet further let us go. Is this daughter of God mortal; can her foot not pass the grave? Is Nature, as men tell us, but a veil concealing the Eternal,

A fold
Of Heaven and earth across His Face,

which we must rend to behold that Face? Do our eyes indeed close for ever on the beauty of earth when they open on the beauty of Heaven? I think not so; I would fain beguile even death itself with a sweet fantasy, if it be no more than fantasy: I believe that in Heaven is earth. Plato's doctrine of Ideals, as I conceive, laid its hand upon the very breast of truth, yet missed her breathing. For beauty—such is my faith—is beauty for eternity.

If the Trinity were not revealed, I should nevertheless be induced to suspect the existence of such a master-key by the trinities through which expounds itself the spirit of man. Such a trinity is the trinity of beauty—Poetry, Art, Music. Although its office is to create beauty, I call it the trinity of beauty, because it is the property of earthly as of the heavenly beauty to create everything to its own image and likeness. Painting is the eye of passion, Poetry is the voice of passion, Music is the throbbing of her heart. For all beauty is passionate, though it may be a passionless passion. So absolutely are these three the distinct manifestations of a single essence, that in considering the general operation of any one of them we consider the general operation of all; and hence, as most easily understood because most definitely objective in its result, I take Art. Not the so-called Art which aims at the mere photographic representation of external objects, for that can only reproduce; but the creative Art which alone is one essence with Poetry and Music.

In the artist's creation there are two distinct stages or processes, the second of which is but a revelation of the first. There is the ideal and the image of the ideal, the painting. To be more exact I should distinguish an intermediate stage, only theoretically separable in order of process from the first stage, with which it is or may be practically synchronous. There is first the ideal, secondly the mental image of the ideal (*i.e.*, the picture of it in form and colour formed on the mental eye*) thirdly the external or objective reproduction of the mental image in material form and colour, in pigments. Now of these three stages which is the most perfect creation, and therefore the most beautiful? They lessen in perfection as they become material; the ideal is the most perfect; the mental image less perfect; the objective image, the painting, least perfect. "But," you say, "this ideal is an abstract thing, without real existence." The commonest of errors, that the ideal is the unreal; and the more pernicious because founded on a truth. It is impossible to speak here with the distinctions and modifications necessary for accuracy; but generally I may say this. The reality of the artist's ideal is not the reality of, *e.g.*, a star; for one is man's creation, the other directly from God. Nor is the reality of the artist's ideal the same in kind as the reality of its objective image, of the painting. The one exists externally, and the senses are cognisant of it; the other within his spirit, and the senses can take no account of it. Yet both are real, actual. If there be an advantage, it is not on the side of the painting; for in no true sense can the image be more real than the thing imaged. I admit that in man the ideal has not the continuous vividness of its objective image. The ideal may be dimmed or even forgotten; though I hold that in such a case it is merely put away from spiritual cognisance as the painting

* *On the mental eye.*—I use the popular expression. In reality this image is as really, as physically (I do not say as vividly) seen as is a ray of sunlight. It is therefore material, not spiritual. But this is not the place for a physiological discussion, and the popular phrase subserves my object, if it does not subserve accuracy.

might be put out of physical sight, and that it still exists in the soul. But were the artist omniscient, so that he could hold all things in perpetual and simultaneous contemplation, the ideal would have an existence as unintermittent as that of the painting, and unlike that of the painting, coeval with the artist's soul.

In Painting and Music the same thing holds good. In both there is the conception (a term perhaps less suggesting unreality than the term "ideal") with its material expression; and between these two stages a mental expression which the material expression cannot realise. The mental expression in its turn cannot represent all the qualities of the conception; and the conception, whose essence is the same in all three arts, has a subtlety which the expressional union of all three could not adequately render, because expression never fully expresses. Yet (and it is on this that I insist) the conception is an actually existent thing, an existence within an existence, real as the spirit in which it exists, *the* reality of which the objective reality is but the necessarily less perfect image, and transcending in beauty the image as body is transcended by soul. Can it be adequately revealed by one mortal to another? No. Could it be so revealed? Yes. If the spirit of man were untrammelled by his body, conception could be communicated by the interpenetration of soul and soul.

* Let us apply this. The Supreme Spirit, creating, reveals His conceptions to man in the material forms of Nature. There is no necessity here for any intermediate process, because nobody obstructs the free passage of conception into expression. An ideal wakes in the Omnipotent Painter; and straightway over the eternal dykes rush forth the flooding tides of night, the blue of Heaven ripples into stars; Nature, from Alp to Alpine flower,

* Be it observed that I am not trying to *explain* anything, metaphysically or otherwise, and consequently my language is not to be taken metaphysically. I am merely endeavouring analogically to *suggest* an idea, as we analogically suggest, without explaining, the Trinity by the trefoil. And the whole thing is put forward as a *fantasy*, which the writer likes to think may be a dim shadowing of truth.

risers lovely with the betrayal of the Divine thought. An ideal wakes in the Omnipotent Poet ; and there chimes the rhythm of an ordered universe. An ideal wakes in the Omnipotent Musician ; and Creation vibrates with the harmony, from the palpitating throat of the bird to the surges of His thunder as they burst in fire along the roaring strand of Heaven ; nay, as Coleridge says,

The silent air
Is Music slumbering on her instrument.

Earthly beauty is but heavenly beauty taking to itself flesh. Yet though this objective presentment of the Divine Ideal be relatively more perfect than any human presentment of a human ideal, though it be the most flawless of possible embodiments ; yet is even the Divine embodiment transcendently inferior to the Divine Ideal. Within the Spirit Who is Heaven lies earth ; for within Him rests the great conception of Creation. There are the woods, the streams, the meads, the hills, the seas that we have known in life, but breathing indeed "an ampler ether, a diviner air," themselves beautiful with a beauty which, for even the highest created spirit utterly to apprehend were "swooning destruction."

Yet there the soul shall enter which hath earned
That privilege by virtue.

As in the participation of human spirits some are naturally more qualified for interpenetration than others—in ordinary language, as one man is more able than his fellows to enter into another's mind, so in proportion as each of us by virtue has become kin to God, will he penetrate the Supreme Spirit, and identify himself with the Divine Ideals. There is the immortal Sicily, there the Elysian Fields, there all visions, all fairness engirdled with the Eternal Fair. This, my faith, is laid up in my bosom.

FRANCIS THOMPSON.

"Betwixt the Cold Moon and the Earth."

WHAT word-compare have I for thee, my moon,
This troubled night of ecstasy?

My moon—for, lover-like, alone

I think to see

Some shadows of thy mystery,

Thy spiritual loveliness,

Oh noble in thy loneliness.

My swan, that swimmest slow with stately wing,

My captain-jewel of the skies,

All other beauties darkening—

The maiden stars with shuddering

Shrouded their changeful eyes,

As upward floated thy humilities.

Lone golden ghost united far apart,

The sun thy bridegroom, and thy bed his light,

Seeking to set thee to his seven-lamp'd heart

Thou art withheld, thy earth restrains thy flight.

Law-bowing and obedient

Thou wing'st thy pathway, to thine orbit bent

In abnegation; sweet, thy dews are fled,

Thy veined eyelids sphered with tears unshed.

Go on thy cold, dear way,

Type of obedience,

I would not call thee thence

A colder love to satisfy.

For me suffice the trust,
 That, atom of innumerable dust,
 I join the hymn, with unheard part,
 That draws thee somewhat to Earth's heart.
 But more—these planet calls
 Live only of the fire that from me falls.
 The quicken'd vision hath departed,
 These stone-faced ghosts are stony-hearted,
 There lurks no life, no mind, no blood ;
 The Universe sinks back to death,
 Dumb, dumb ; nay, never drew it breath,
 The myst'ry-stricken heart lies drown'd in its want's flood.

But from the dying embers of this song
 I blow a little flame ;
 And in the sun's great name,
 And in the earth's—striking a soul along
 The ether far to thee, from mine,
 . I send thee Nature's love divine.
 My weight of earth shrinks 'fore these pale immensities,
 And from these eyes, out to the many mysteries,
 My mind springs lightly ; knows (not yet unfurled)
 The Universe its play-ground, its great sport from world to world.

VERNON BLACKBURN.

*The Story of a Conversion.**(Continued from page 134.)*

CHAPTER IV.

THE NATURE OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

WE left off at two questions: "What is the real position of Holy Scripture?" and "What is its office in establishing Our Lord's divine mission?" On the vulgar Protestant hypothesis, the answer to the first of these is, briefly, that the Bible is the manual from which all knowledge of revealed doctrine is to be derived by the exercise of the individual judgment. That answer, it is evident, implies two things: that the exercise of the individual judgment is the normal method of ascertaining revealed truth; and that Holy Scripture is the treatise from which alone, in the last resort, such truth is to be ascertained. The first of these two things was the subject of the previous chapter. There remains the second—is Holy Scripture a manual? The Catholic reply, as we all know, is that it is not, but is one of two quarries, as it were—the other being tradition—from which the materials for the public judgments of the Church, and, in subordination to them, the personal judgments of individuals, are derived.

As to its office in establishing Our Lord's divine mission, the answer is that the proof of the divine mission of Our Saviour is drawn partly from the doctrines of Christianity, and partly from *His* history and position in history, and from *its* history and position in history; and that Holy Scripture is concerned chiefly in the historical aspect of the argument—

with those parts of it, of course, which fall within the limits of place and time covered by the books of the Bible.

To discuss these connected subjects—and the discussion, I flatter myself, will be neither uninteresting nor unprofitable—we must, obviously, turn to Holy Scripture itself. And Holy Scripture may be discussed from two points of view. It may be regarded, formally, as inspired—the characteristic that makes it emphatically *Holy* Scripture; or it may be viewed on its material side as a mass of writings or documents which, independently of their inspiration, afford evidence of the divinity of the Christian religion, simply through being authentic records of the way in which it originated and the supernatural foundations from which it was built up. In thus employing the Sacred Writings, however, we must not make use of any point or argument which involves their inspiration as a premiss. For if we did so, we should be reasoning in a circle. We should be inferring the truth of the Evangelical history from their inspiration, and we should afterwards have to prove their inspiration from the truth of the Evangelical history. Nevertheless, we must not forget that they *are* inspired; and, therefore, before proceeding to discuss them on their material side, it will be well briefly to state wherein their inspiration consists.

By a document being inspired is meant that it proceeds from a person who was inspired as to its production, and who, therefore, either by writing it himself or by procuring it to be written by an amanuensis, was an inspired author. The term inspired primarily relates to the author himself; and when applied to a book is used in a secondary sense parallel to that in which we speak of a book being learned or devout, because it flows from and expresses the learning or the devotion of him who composed it. Further, the inspiration, in this second sense, is that of the original document. It is no part of the doctrine of inspiration that the mistakes of copyists are inspired; but copies and translations have an inspired authority only in so far as they

correspond to the originals. There is here, however, an exceptional case to be noticed. A sacred writer may make use of uninspired antecedent documents or traditions, as Esdras, for example, cites or gives the substance of an edict or part of an edict of Cyrus, King of Persia (Esd. i. 2—4). But quotations and extracts do not become inspired by the mere fact of their being quoted or extracted. They are not authoritative unless it can be shown that the sacred writer is not merely adding them as illustrative matter and quoting them merely for what they are worth. For ancient documents and traditions are continually recited or summarised by historians, who in some cases, indeed, pronounce them to be correct or charge them with inaccuracy, but in others simply relate them as they stand without entering into criticism, and insert them because they deem them worthy of the attention of their readers.

According to the more common and, in fact, now generally received opinion of Catholic divines, it is not the individual words or the wording, but the sense, that is inspired. The sacred writers, that is to say, were left each to use his own language, and to express himself in his own way, as long as that way did really and objectively express what he was commissioned to declare; his style, and the manner of speaking and writing natural to him, *might* be, but, equally, *need* not be, objects of supernatural intervention. Such intervention would be indispensable only to enable him to find words which would convey the meaning if he could not find them for himself. When the Council of Trent and the Vatican Council* speak of

* The decree of the Vatican Council is as follows: "According to the faith of the Universal Church, declared by the Holy Council of Trent, this divine revelation"—the revelation of faith and morals, spoken of in a previous decree—"is contained in the written books and in the unwritten traditions which have come down to us, passed on as it were from hand to hand—received by the Apostles from the lips of Christ Himself, or from the Apostles themselves, the Holy Spirit dictating them. And these books of the Old and of the New Testament are to be received entire with all their parts as sacred and canonical [*i.e.*, as comprehended in the authoritative canon or list of the books of Holy Scripture], as they are enumerated in the decree of the aforesaid Council and are contained in the old vulgate Latin edition. And the Church holds them as sacred and canonical, not on the ground that after having been

God being the Author of Holy Scripture, and of the Holy Spirit as dictating it, we know, from the history of these Councils, that there was no intention to decide in favour of what is sometimes called the theory of verbal inspiration. The word *dictare*, to dictate, means, both in Latin and in English, not only to dictate as a schoolmaster does to a scholar in a dictation lesson, but to prescribe, command, authoritatively suggest; and in the conciliar decrees it refers not only to written books, but also to unwritten traditions, which cannot be said to be *dictated* in the schoolmaster's sense. Both in Latin and in English, the word *auctor*, author, not only means an author in the literary meaning of the word—in which, if his “copy” is closely followed, he is responsible not only for the words and phrases, but for the capital letters, the punctuation, and the accentuation—but also, as in the line *Auctor superni luminis*, it signifies, more generally, a cause, framer, or originator. The expression that God is the author of the books both of the Old and of the New Testament is taken from an earlier conciliar decree directed against the Manichæans, who acknowledged that the New Testament proceeded from the Author of all good, but declared that the Old emanated from the author of evil. At the same time, the difference between the sense theory and the verbal theory of inspiration is by no means so great as might be supposed. Even were the inspiration directed to the very words, the sacred authors would have been guided to use the expressions natural to their time and their personality, unless we suppose mere nine days' wonders. An analogous question occurs with respect to *taste*. It is evidently to be solved in the same manner.

Again, Holy Scripture is inspired to this extent, that it contains “revelation without error.” The truths of faith and composed by mere human industry, they were afterwards approved by her authority, nor yet for the sole reason that they contain revelation without error; but because, composed by the Holy Spirit as inspirer, they have God for their Author, and as such were delivered to the Church herself.”

morals which it embraces are not contained in it in a depraved or corrupted form. And it is in its bearings on *these* truths, and not on truths of other orders, that its singular importance consists. The province of the Bible is that of religion. It was not meant to teach us geology, or astronomy, or biology, but (with tradition) is the ulterior rule of Christian faith and Christian moral discipline,* so that it is under this aspect that the Church claims the direction of its interpretation.† But it never gives a set exposition of a doctrine, such as may be found in treatises on doctrinal or on moral theology or in an encyclopædia, defining the terms employed, stating the points one by one, guarding against errors which may be committed with respect to them, and meeting the objections that may be urged. Much less does it go in any regular order through the whole body of doctrines of faith and morals. On turning over its pages from Genesis to

* "The sacred and oecumenical Synod of Trent," we read in the decree on the canonical Scriptures, passed in its third session—"constantly keeping this aim before its eyes, that errors being taken away, there should be preserved in the Church the very purity of the Gospel which, after it had been promised by the prophets in the Holy Scriptures, our Lord Jesus Christ with His own lips first promulgated, and then through His Apostles, as the fountain both of all saving truth and moral discipline commanded to be preached to every creature—and well knowing that this truth and discipline are contained in the written books and the unwritten traditions which, received by the Apostles from the mouth of Christ Himself, or received from the Apostles, the Holy Spirit dictating them, have come down to us, passed on as it were from hand to hand—following the example of the ancient fathers, receives and venerates with like sentiments of piety all the books both of the Old and of the New Testament, of both of which one and the same God is the author; and likewise the traditions themselves, both those appertaining to faith and those appertaining to morals, as having been either orally dictated by Christ or dictated by the Holy Ghost, and preserved by perpetual succession in the Catholic Church." It then gives the list of the books referred to in the Vatican decree cited above.

† The Vatican Council's decree is succeeded by the following rider, referring to the interpretation of Holy Scripture, and re-enacting a decree of the Council of Trent which comes next after that cited in the preceding note: "But inasmuch as what the holy Synod of Trent advantageously [*i.e.*, for the common welfare of Christian people] decreed, in order to put a restraint on whimsical intelligences, respecting the interpretation of Holy Scripture, is perversely expounded by certain persons; we, renewing its decree, declare its intention to have been that in matters of faith and morals which appertain to the building up of Christian doctrine, that is to be taken for the true sense of Holy Scripture which our Holy Mother the Church held and holds, to whom it belongs to judge of the true sense and interpretation of the Holy Scriptures; and, consequently, that it is not allowable to anyone to interpret Holy Scripture contrary to this sense or to the unanimous consent of the Fathers."

the Apocalypse, its method might perhaps at first sight seem historical. But it is not in reality historical. It consists of pieces of history, biographies more or less completely related, letters, Mosaic legislative enactments, collections of proverbs, poems and fragments of poems, parables or stories with a purpose, rolls of prophecy, family genealogies, and what not, by means of which a very large number of persons express themselves on topics of a more or less religious character, without in the least concealing or attempting to lay aside their individual characteristics. In the great majority of cases, moreover, these writers are not directly addressing us. They are speaking to others; but we overhear what they say. St. Paul is in correspondence with his Corinthian or his Galatian disciples, and his letter has been kept; Isaias is commenting on contemporary events in Palestine and its neighbourhood, and his declarations or some of them have been preserved; and, let it be added, the writers belong to different periods of history and different levels of civilisation. They also belong to different levels or stages of revelation. Most are Jews; a few are Christians; and the Jews belong to different periods in the development of the religious consciousness. When we say, then, that Holy Scripture is inerrant in faith and morals, we must understand what we mean. We cannot, for instance, always put into our mouths what comes out of the mouth of David. God's providence develops itself; and it would be very improper for us to say many things which had a right meaning on the lips of Jewish, old-world David. And even when there is no question of earlier and later, we have to bear in mind that as the clearest glass *refracts* the light even though it does not in the least adulterate it, so different minds make different phases of truth especially their own. St. Paul has one way of speaking, St. James has another, and St. John a third. Each has his favourite subjects and trains of thought. God, in a word, chooses His instruments. When He has a particular part of His providence to disclose, it is to be

expected that He will not do violence, but will select as its exponent a person naturally fitted by bent and temperament for the work.

From another point of view, too, inspiration is not to be conceived of as denaturalising or involving a paresis or paralysis of the natural powers. It is distinguished by theologians into revelation and assistance—Almighty God *revealing* what the sacred authors had no natural means of knowing, and *assisting* them to come to a right knowledge by the use of their natural faculties where means of obtaining information were accessible. Inspiration is in fact a reasonable extension of the doctrine of divine grace; which may, accordingly, help us to understand it. Catholics believe, and religious men outside the pale of the Catholic Church agree with them, that supernatural impulses are more or less constantly and vividly working in the minds and hearts of human beings alongside of natural influences, and that whether in answer to prayer or independently of it, God communicates healthier aspirations, deeper insight, clearer light; directs the train of ideas if it is pliant to His influence; makes particular thoughts and modes of feeling, which may have occurred spontaneously, or were suggested by reading or conversation, to stand out from the rest; and makes particular ideas dominant. Now we cannot disentangle in detail the operations of grace in our own consciousness from workings of concealed springs of nature. But inspiration is only an extension of such operations as those just exemplified; and it is only such an extension of them as renders certain pronouncements of the inspired person safely available, as far as they go, for the religious guidance of others, if only these others remember the two points dealt with in the previous paragraph about “development” and “aspect.” When it is said that Moses or Isaias were inspired, it is not meant that all their actions were right. That would be to fall into the confusion with which we justly reproach Protestants when they are arguing

against infallibility. It is not even meant that all their judgments were correct. What is intended is that, partly on account of what they were in themselves, and partly on account of the position they occupied, Almighty God so guarded and guided them as to keep them sound with respect to certain pronouncements—not all they said, nor even, it may be, all they wrote, but all that were to be divinely handed down as stamped with the seal of His authority. It need hardly be insisted on that there is in this nothing unreasonable to anyone who believes in the doctrine of grace. As little are we unreasonable in believing that having thus formed and shaped their message in them, the Holy Spirit actuated them to write or dictate it as a message coming from Himself, though coming from Himself through human instruments. He thus makes Himself the Author of the writing in a sense not so close, indeed, as that in which we are the authors of what we write with our own hands, but closer than that in which God is the Author of every good work.

So far of inspiration as to faith and morals, the intrinsic sphere of inspiration. But were the sacred writers also inspired as to secular subjects? On this point, on which nothing has been absolutely defined by the Church, I think the common and weighty opinion of Catholic divines cannot be better expressed than in the words of the universally venerated Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster, in his short but admirable treatise on "The Temporal Mission of the Holy Ghost." Commenting on some expressions of Holden in that author's "Analysis of Divine Faith," to the effect that in matters which are not doctrinal and have no proximate or necessary connexion with doctrine the sacred writers had only that assistance which is common to other pious authors, His Eminence hastens to explain that, notwithstanding this, Holden "denied the presence of anything false or erroneous in Holy Scripture; if he limited the infallible assistance of the Holy Spirit to matters of faith

and morals, he supposed that the whole of the text was written by such assistance as, in fact, excluded error; or, in other words, that if the sacred writers in other matters might have erred, they never did. . . . It is with surprise that I find the Abbé le Noir ('Dictionary of the Harmonies of Reason and Faith,' pp. 991—2), writing in these terms 'There are in Holy Scripture faults of geography, chronology, natural history, of physical science, of science generally; in short, perhaps, also philosophical inaccuracies, and literary errors against real and unchangeable good taste.'"^{*} His Eminence adds[†] that, as is evident, "Holy Scripture does not contain a revelation of what are called physical sciences; and that when they are spoken of, the language is that of sense, not of science; of popular, not of technical usage." It is evident, of course, that the sacred writers accepted the phraseology of current opinions: seeing that in times when everyone believed that the earth was a flat body at rest and that the sun, moon, and stars moved daily round it, they wrote of a flat and immovable earth and of the sun and moon's motion being stayed when daylight was miraculously prolonged. The practical commentary on such expressions is to be found in the controversies about the Antipodes and about Galileo, and respecting Newton's "Principia." It is equally evident that they could have spoken in no other way without imperilling the whole effect of their mission. "To have uttered one syllable that implied motion in the earth would have issued," as De Quincey noticed long ago, "in the following ruins: First, it would have tainted the teacher with the reputation of lunacy. Secondly, it would have placed him in this inextricable dilemma. On the one hand, to answer the questions prompted by his own perplexing language, would have opened upon him, as a necessity, one stage of scientific cross-examination after another, until his spiritual mission would have been forcibly swallowed up in the mission of natural philosopher; but, on the other

^{*} "Temporal Mission," pp. 150, 156. [†] p. 165.

hand, to pause resolutely at any one stage of this public examination, and to refuse all further advance, would be, in the popular opinion, to retreat, as a baffled disputant, from insane paradoxes which it had not been found possible to support."* The arts and sciences, he very properly maintains in an adjoining passage, compose one vast machinery for the irritation and development of the human intellect. They are the earthly paradise which has been given us to till and to keep. *Cælum cæli Domino; terram autem dedit filiis hominum.* To see God descending into the arena of science, and contending, as it were, for His own prizes, by teaching science in the Bible, would be to see Him intercepting from their self-evident destination—viz., man's intellectual benefit—His own problems, by solving them Himself. In such secular matters, any declarations of further truth than was current in the time and within the sphere of the sacred writer, or from that time and sphere could be reached by him by the employment of his natural means of knowledge, would have been, let us not forget, a merely secular revelation. But (it may be asked) if on principle he was debarred from passing on such matters beyond these limits—if he might not speak of (for instance) the sphericity of the earth, did he nevertheless in his own consciousness know all about it? Did Almighty God in effect say to him: "As you are about to use expressions implying that there is in the universe more than relative depth and height, I will enlighten you personally by telling you that height and depth are relative to the position of the speaker or thinker on the earth, which is a rotating globe; and that all such expressions are therefore only popular; but in what you write or say you may not for a moment suggest such a thing." I do not think it at all probable that He did anything of the sort. But whether He did it or not is a question about the psychological condition of the sacred

* "Works" i. 134.

authors. It does not in the least affect the objective meaning of what they wrote respecting these secular subjects, which has to be determined according to the established rules of interpretation. Nor were the questions rising out of the heliocentric theory by any means the only questions on which they would have anticipated the results of later investigation by enunciating what we now believe to be the correct scientific conclusion. There were, as the Babylonian tablets have made everyone aware, current opinions on other subjects besides. The state of things is, however, entirely different where the secular matter dealt with has a proximate or necessary bearing on faith or morals. It would not do, for instance, to say that Our Lord's resurrection was a physical fact, and that therefore the Evangelists may only have followed current opinions about it.

We shall next pass to the material side of Holy Scripture.

X. Y. Z.

(To be continued.)

The Maid of Molokai.

MISS AMY CONSTANCE FOWLER LEFT LIVERPOOL FOR
MOLOKAI TO NURSE THE LEPERS, JANUARY 18TH, 1890.

SINCE Thou Thy Thirst with vinegar didst slake,
Didst own Thy Kingship by a crown of thorn,
Didst let that Body Beautiful be torn,
Which erst for me from Mary's Thou didst take—
Which still for me Thy Levites daily break :
Move comfort far from me ! As Thou hast borne,
So will I bear, a lonely life, death's scorn :
Lord, I will be a leper for Thy sake.

Girl, as His hour of great abandonment
Drew all men to Him—even as He saith—
So when thy lonely steps, led by dread duty,
Fared forth from home, a nation with thee went.
And thou, though languishing to leprous death,
Desired shalt be for thy immortal beauty.

JOHN OLDCASTLE.

The Catholic Portrait Gallery:

STEPHEN JOSEPH PERRY: JESUIT AND ASTRONOMER.

TO be a Jesuit and to be a man of science are among the happy compatibilities to which mankind in several countries and several generations has been accustomed. The corrupt tradition which represents the members of the Society of Jesus as ready to adopt any means to compass ignoble ends, has probably sprung out of the fact of the great elasticity and adaptive character of Jesuit operations for the good of souls, especially in heathen and heretical countries. This may be well understood by a saying of the great St. Francis Xavier about those with whom he came in contact, to win them to God: "I let them go in at their own door, but I take care they come out at mine." Supposing an individual to develop, during his seventeen years' training in the Society, a special talent in the direction of philology, historical research, or pure science, this would seem a providential leaning to determine the secondary path on which his energies are to be employed. The secondary path; for, let Pascal two centuries back, or Newdigate and Whalley yesterday, say what they will, the primary object of the Society is to form men versed in that science of prayer by which they shall lead others with themselves along the path of Christian perfection.

Such reflections rise instinctively to the mind of anyone who knew how truly the essential of being a Jesuit and the accidentals of being an astronomer met and harmonised in Father Perry. On this point we may transcribe from *The Weekly*

Register the following paragraphs contributed by the pen of a fellow Jesuit who has himself placed Catholic Journalism under a debt as great as any astronomy owes to his lamented brother in Religion :—

They who witnessed the piety of Father Perry's regular observance of the rules of his Order, the conscientious though vigorous sameness of his daily life, could not doubt that, with him, science was the handmaid, not the mistress, of religion. Those again, who sought his advice as a confessor, readily bear witness to the wisdom and gentleness that marked his guidance of souls. This was his more limited apostolate, though the more essentially priestly, among those who lived with him in the same college, and who learnt to love the man apart from their respect for the scientist. But his more extended apostolate has lain, and will so continue, among those who make up the public mind of England. Fathers Ricci, Secchi, and others, before him, and some of Father Perry's own advanced disciples that are still to come, may be taken to offer a *catena* of evidence, that the heavens which show forth the glory of their First Cause, and the firmament that declares the work of His hands, can never be unfaithful to His yet higher message through the Church of nations. Father Matthew Ricci, the Jesuit, predicted in China an eclipse for the year 1596, and thus reformed the Chinese calendar, and gained admittance to Peking. Father Secchi, in our own days, was acknowledged, even by Republican priest-haters, as the most efficient man to direct an observatory, and thus remained at his post while Rome was Garibaldian. The beloved and respected priest who has now gone to his reward, has been another leader on the same path, to convince the world, that all truth must lead towards the Author of all truth, and to the possession of that supreme science which is the knowledge of Himself.

Another friend of Father Perry, contemporary with him in the Society, has written with perfect truth that he was never known to shorten a meditation, or omit an examen, in order to attend to the most important observations of his favourite science. Such will appear no faint praise to those who know how easily a less determined will might dispense its possessor under such circumstances, with a "just this once," or "as soon as the observation has been taken." Moreover, it is to be

recorded, that the distressing malady to which Father Perry succumbed was but an aggravated form of that which had seized him on each of his astronomical expeditions, undertaken at the bidding of the British Government, to the Tropics. He had, indeed, foreseen its probability before starting. The circumstances, therefore, under which he complied with the wish of those to whose lightest word he listened with unfaltering conformity, created the last act, as it was one of the noblest, of his consistent life.

Of the last days of Father Perry's diligent life the touching record comes, as it might, from the hand of yet another religious brother. It is Father Strickland who sends from Barbados to the Provincial of the Society of Jesus at home, the narrative of which the following passages are taken :—

The *Comus*, man-of-war, Captain Atkinson, left Barbados on December 2nd with the Rev. Father Perry on board for his expedition to the Isles de Salût, near Cayenne. They arrived on the 7th. During the voyage the weather was very rough, and the *Comus* rolls heavily in bad weather. Father Perry suffered very badly from sea sickness, and was much done up on his arrival; but, without allowing himself any rest, landed the same evening to view the site and introduce himself to the authorities. On the following Sunday, the 8th, he preached in French in the church, and again on the 15th. He took up his quarters in the hospital. It was only on the 20th that Captain Atkinson and his officers became aware that Father Perry was in bad health, for he made light of all his personal wants for fear of giving trouble to others. In fact, it was this very spirit of saving trouble to others which made him persevere in declining Captain Atkinson's urgent and repeated request that he would live with them on board the *Comus* and land each morning for his work. On the Friday before the eclipse Father Perry complained of being "very bad inside," but he worked on until nearly three a.m., and when the men retired to the *Comus* he tried to snatch a little rest where he was, and lay down in a hammock in the tent. He was up again before six o'clock to take the position of the sun at rising. At 6.45 the men arrived from the ship, and at 7.30 there was a complete, most careful, and most successful rehearsal of all the operations and duties which were

to be performed next morning in the solemn moments of the eclipse, for which they had been preparing so long and had travelled so far. Just before noon on Saturday, Lieutenant Thierns went to see him at the hospital and found him much exhausted ; but he was again at his post in the observatory at three p.m., at which time an important photograph was secured with the mirror. In the evening he went on board the *Comus* for dinner, but was only able to lie on a sofa all the time ; and he sent to the doctor for some chlorodyne. Much against the wishes and earnest advice of Captain Atkinson, Father Perry made his way on shore, in a violent pouring rain, to sleep in his own quarters, and would allow no one to hinder him. Next morning, Sunday the 22nd, was the important moment of the eclipse. Lieutenant Thierns landed with his observatory party at six o'clock, and on arrival was informed by Mr. Rooney that Father Perry had passed a very bad night and was very ill, so a man was sent to help him over the bad half-mile from his quarters, as he declined to let himself be carried on a stretcher. He reached the observatory in good time, though in a very exhausted state. As the important moment approached he seemed to rally, and, during the minutes of the eclipse, seemed to be himself again, and showed no signs of illness or exhaustion. There were two photographic instruments in use—one an old one, which had often been in use before, the other was the special new corona graphic instrument prepared for the occasion, of which Father Perry himself took charge. He was so alert and self-possessed during the eclipse that his friends about him hoped he was not so ill ; but he gave way immediately after, and with much difficulty reached his quarters in the hospital. It was known after, that during the previous night he had been very seriously ill.

Dr. McSweeney, the staff-surgeon of the *Comus*, went on shore at five p.m. to see Father Perry, and found him feebly coming down the hill towards the ship. He took him carefully on board, and immediately reported to Captain Atkinson how serious the case was. Up to this time Father Perry had said as little as possible about his illness for fear of giving trouble. That Sunday night he suffered very much, and next morning it was evident that he was suffering from the very worst form of dysentery. On Monday he suffered much, and there was no sign of a rally. On Tuesday he was so much worse that the doctor sent for the French Abbé on shore to give him all the last Sacraments. The Abbé speedily arrived with the French

commandant and two hospital Sisters of Charity. Father Perry called for the French commandant, and, in French, begged him to excuse all the trouble he had given, and asked the doctor to forgive any impatience which he had shown in his illness, and begged also that the same message might be conveyed to his brethren in Europe.

Wednesday was Christmas Day, and Father Perry was better; so with his wish it was decided to make a push to reach Demerara, he being willing to incur the additional risk of sea sickness, in order to reach the Bishop and his *confrères* in Demerara, and die amongst them if his time was come. He passed a quieter day, and never showed any symptoms of the dreaded sea-sickness; but towards evening he became much worse, during the night he was as bad as could be, and the doctor never left him a moment. On Friday morning he was quieter, but utterly exhausted, and his pulse began to fail. About noon he was able to converse with his assistant, Mr. Rooney (who, as the officers told me, rivalled Father Perry in his complete sacrifice of himself to his work), and gave him detailed directions about the work they were both engaged upon, also instructions for himself, for the Bishop in Demerara, and for the Fathers in England. At 1.30 all hope was gone, and his end was fast approaching. Mr. Rooney took the Prayer Book and read him the prayers he wished for. He renewed his religious vows with much devotion, held his crucifix in his hand and often kissed it, offering his sufferings and his life at the foot of the Cross, and resigning himself entirely to the will of God; and was constantly praying till about three p.m., when he began to wander, and thinking himself again engaged in the supreme moment of the scientific mission which had so long filled his thoughts, began to give his orders as during the short minutes of the eclipse. For the last half-hour he lost consciousness, became rapidly weaker, and ceased to breathe quietly at 4.20. He was among strangers, but still he was grieved for by many as a friend; for by his kindness of manner, his urbanity, and his happy aptness of speech, he had gained the kindest goodwill of all those he came in contact with. His body was laid out, and he was dressed in his white vestments as if going to the altar. The *Comus* came on to Barbados, where Captain Atkinson, the doctors, and officers gave me all these details.

Reviews and Views.

MR. GLADSTONE'S ARTICLE. — A FAC-SIMILE LETTER. — MR. GLADSTONE ON CONFESSION.—WHAT DOES MR. GLADSTONE MEAN?—OF THE SAME OPINION STILL.—A WOMAN OF LETTERS.—THE REAL TENNYSON.—THE COLLEGIAN.—THE COMING TERM.

MR. GLADSTONE'S
ARTICLE.

THE excitement caused by the republication of Mr. Gladstone's article on "Ellen Middleton" may be traced to various causes. No doubt, the subject-matter of the article was itself such as to affect many minds. Catholics could not be other than interested in the fact that Mr. Gladstone, at whatever time of his life, had arrived, as an outsider, at the conviction that England was suffering from a lack of spiritual discipline and of searching of heart, in some way associated with the abandonment of the confessional. The ultra-Protestant party was proportionately alarmed and disgusted. The priest in absolution flitted behind the words of the ex-Premier; and an evening paper, an adept in sensation making, was not slow to perceive how easily on this score the dogs of warlike dissent could be loosed on Mr. Gladstone, though he might in politics hold them hard in leash. So they were told that Mr. Gladstone had chosen his eightieth birthday as the moment for resuscitating his forgotten article of forty-five years before, and that he had given it to the world, for the first time with his name, in the pages of a Catholic magazine. The fact was that

Mr. Gladstone's permission for the republication had been given a year earlier, so that he not only had no voice in the moment of the appearance, but he even had time to forget that he ever consented to its publication at all. Finding a hornet's nest suddenly loosed upon him, he expressed his doubt ; whereupon the Editor of MERRY ENGLAND published the post-card of permission he had originally received : " I should ill repay your courtesies by declining your request. Pray proceed as you think fit." Then a section of the Press which had been indifferent, or nearly so, to the great issues involved by a discussion on the spiritual life of England, became violently interested. To assert that Mr. Gladstone was a past and present master of prevarication was the fashion of the day. What had happened was surely simple enough. Mr. Gladstone had done so many kind acts during the year—he had forgotten this particular one of them.

A FAC-SIMILE
LETTER.

BEFORE examining the sentiments of Mr. Gladstone on the subject of Confession—sentiments which must be pronounced to be fatally marked by *amateurity*—we give in fac-simile the courteous letter which Mr. Gladstone addressed to the Editor of this magazine by way of amends for his momentary forgetfulness of the permission he had given for the republication of his article :—

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Academy
Jan 1. 1890

Dear Mr. Mayhew

I have searched hard, as
well as I could, and in an ex-
traordinary premium of public
and private engagements, for
your letter to which I replied
on Dec. 12. 1888, in order that
I might thoroughly understand
what has puzzled me so
much. From now on I can-
not comprehend, the letters
of that month are not yet
coming at this time and I

must let the ~~death~~ sound
over.

But the words you have
produced contribute an
unequivocal though appa-
rently somewhat reluctant
consent to what you have asked.

What I do not think I could
have agreed to, had I understood
it, is the republication of my
paper in a periodical devoted
known humbly and ably to
the interests of a particular
religious body, as such a pro-
ceeding gives rise to unfound-
ed inferences.

In the only intimation which

proceeded from me to the
fact I stated my belief that
you were incapable of evilful
living; and, while I hope for
this to prove the case, I must
now in fairness add that
the presumptions are on your
side, and that your asser-
tion that you explicitly stated
the character of your request
must outweigh ~~any suggestion~~
the mere absence of recollection
on my part.

In these circumstances I
cannot think of offering any
objection to your publishing

the remainder of the paper
in your next number, or
to your giving publicity to
this letter; and if I have troubled
you in error I much regret
it.

Yours faithfully

W. Lullatone

MR. GLADSTONE
ON
CONFESSION.



R. GLADSTONE, continuing his article on the aid given by Confession to the ordering of the interior life, makes dark again the things which he at first made comparatively clear. That the difficult beginnings of a spiritual career should need the discipline of humiliation and the leading of the apostolate of another, is a truth which Protestant England has chosen to ignore so long that its learning anew must needs be rudimentary. With this we must have patience. But it is another matter when the separate and important idea of this submission to order and leading is confused with that of mere confidence-making, or with that of getting advice in complications that arise from secret sins ; or again, with that of apprising those the sinner may have injured of the fact of the offence. An effusion of self in minor confidences is no essence of the Sacrament of Confession, as Catholics have it ; nor is the seeking of sound advice in the effort to escape from the difficulties of outward entanglements ; nor is, necessarily, an open avowal to the man against whom sin or involuntary offence has been committed. In "Ellen Middleton" these things are mingled, doubtless for the sake of making a story which should resemble other stories in the subjection of persons to the working of exterior events—the situation which the novel writer of all times has made his matter-of-course. But what is easily excusable in a lady's story is at least not easily intelligible in the review that takes glimpses into the depths of the conscience of Christian man. Mr. Gladstone begins with the renewal of the living conscious responsibility of the soul ; he ends with the misunderstandings of husbands and wives whom chance and inexplicable oaths and improbable passions keep apart. Spiritually considered, there is bathos in the passage from a thought so essential to one so accidental.

WHAT DOES
MR. GLADSTONE
MEAN?



R rather, Mr. Gladstone does not end here; he seems to turn back. The idea of Confession takes spiritual shape again. We must confess our sins for the sake of purity of conscience, not merely for the sake of taking comfort, or for the sake of avoiding ambiguity in our human relations, he seems to tell us. But for instruction in the duties of such a practice, for the pastorate that prescribes and safeguards it, we need not, he says, go to the Church of Rome, whose shepherds hold the rod and the staff; it is enough, forsooth, to "go back" to the Church of England, with whom there are no laws, no rules, no authority nor legislation, no sanction for execution. That we may reconstruct, where it has so deliberately been allowed to go to pieces, the system of sacramental Confession, let us, he says in effect, turn away from it where it exists not only in perfect construction, but in vital organism—and in what other mission of man to man should vitality be so needed? Though a science and art, both, have assuredly to be learnt by the confessor, Mr. Gladstone would send those chosen souls among his countrymen, who have conceived for themselves the hatred of evil and the love of good, to place themselves under an apostolate incapable of teaching to its missionaries either the art or the science. If even where both the science and the art exist in their order and their vitality, and where, moreover, there exists with them that power of the keys which gives them something beyond a consequence—which gives them a definite effect—if even in the Church of Rome the life of the conscience cannot be other than difficult, perilous, and humanly solitary, what can it be among a company of Anglicans without rules, or decisions, or discipleship? But it seems even doubtful how far Mr. Gladstone is referring to sacramental Confession, or to Confession intended to be such, in his recommendation to Anglicans to confide their sins to one another. Short of the serious sacramental act, there are obviously confessions to be made by the young, the weak, and

the suffering which might save from life-long sorrow, whether by bringing instruction to the aid of the ignorant, or by delivering an Ellen Middleton from the tyranny of a Henry Lovell through the destruction of his monopoly of her secret. The latter situation is dear to novelists, but too rare in real life to bear a part in so serious a question. A parent, a physician, a husband, may give instruction and advice so valuable as almost to reach the dignity of spiritual direction. But the value is all owing to the penitent's forlornness, and that forlornness could never have existed with the habit of sacramental Confession. If Mr. Gladstone intends no more than the suggestion of this kind of confession, he has merely recommended a difficult remedy for a preventible evil. A difficult remedy, because the young must always find it bitterly difficult to confess their secrets to those who share their daily lives, and in some relations the difficulty amounts to moral impossibility. A girl must be broken down with the very fear of hell before she will confess to her mother; she will go on in these terrors altogether rather than confess to the father, or, say, the elder brother, who may be her only natural adviser. And what of the soul which is neither woman's nor child's, but masculine in self-possession, old in experience, and ripe in wisdom, and has no natural superiors? Moreover, what has this doubtful confessing one to another to do especially with Anglicanism? Young consciences in the still Calvinistic regions of New England have a record of interior suffering the very thought of which is intolerable. A glimpse at this is given in Mrs. Beecher Stowe's "Old Town Folk"—a far more tragic book than her showy and gory romance of slavery. No; Mr. Gladstone has had almost half-a-century to think out his thought as to the problem of "Ellen Middleton." He should tell us what confession he now thinks will help the solitary conscience—not in any entanglements with a lady novelist's bold, bad young men of unverified type, but in its strife with self and its tentative tending towards God.

OF THE SAME
OPINION
STILL.



R. GLADSTONE'S general view as to the need of a tribunal of penance, however vague his ideas may be as to the penitent's procedure and requirements, remains to-day what it was in the early days of the Oxford Movement. To a correspondent who wrote to Hawarden about the instalment of the article published last month, Mr. Gladstone replied:—"Were I writing now, I should word more carefully the reference to Mr. Wesley. I say this having perused the half article; of the whole one I cannot say that I possess a copy. As to the substance, I stick by it, and think that those who treat it as a reproach to Protestantism do themselves defame Protestantism thereby." And to the Editor of MERRY ENGLAND he has since addressed a further letter, in which he says of some veritable Protestant reviewers:—

"I THINK THE CRITICISMS WHICH TREAT REFERENCES TO THE GRAVITY OF SIN AS SMACKING OF POKERY ARE LITTLE LESS THAN LOATHSOME."

A WOMAN OF
LETTERS.

THE death of Mrs. Pfeiffer has occurred after but a year of widowhood, which was widowhood indeed. Among the few who, according to Robert Louis Stevenson, are "really married," were assuredly the woman poet and the husband who was close to what she herself called in a sonnet in this very magazine, "the central secret of the birth of song" in her, and who was never satisfied that the world paused attentively enough over her utterance to be penetrated by the whole of her thought. To most careful readers Mrs. Pfeiffer's poetry was not so profound as to demand exceptional study. Yet it was intellectual poetry, moved originally by mental processes, even though the emotion (without which poetry can hardly utter itself) expressed the thought in the ultimate form of the verse. She was strongly shaken, but not carried, by the thoughts of her contemporaries.

Against the ultimate endurance and the conscious acceptance of suffering, not inflicted by justice, but simply consequent—a Karma which there is no forgiveness to mitigate—she protested by claiming happiness as a lawful longing of the heart. She was almost alone to express that claim among many whom George Eliot's cruel and loveless doctrine of self-sacrifice appalled into admiration. Of the far darker doctrine of Schopenhauer she must have tasted and refused the uttermost bitterness before she could have expressed it in the indignant sonnet "To Nature"—one of her finest poems in this form : Nature, whom she rebukes for "stumbling on thought and throwing off the spheres," for crowning "wild work with foulest wrong,"

When first thou lightedst on a seeming goal
And darkly blunderedst on man's suffering soul.

Mrs. Pfeiffer's poetical moments were almost always solemn, and her work in verse deserved singularly ill the trivial adjective "graceful," which no woman writer has yet been allowed to escape. Her prose was often most delicate in feeling and in touch, temperate in fancy, and moderate without dulness or thinness. It may certainly be said of her that if she had not absolute genius she had *tempérament*, a minor but equally distinctive mark of the vocation to Letters.

THE REAL
TENNYSON.

IT is refreshing to get at the real Tennyson again. Somewhere in the region which Mr. Walters has called Tennyson Land the Rev. Charles Yeld, of Nottingham, has unearthed some lines—and a love-story. It is nothing less than a little romance of the poet's early days, vouched for, not by idle rumour, but by a copy of a poetical tribute to "his mistress's eyebrow," which is now brought to light for the first time. The young poet was in love with a girl of the name of Bradshaw, and expressed his feelings so :

Because she bore the iron name
 Of him who doomed his King to die,
 I deemed her one of harsher frame,
 And looks that awe the passer-by,
 But found a maiden, tender, shy,
 With fair blue eyes and passing sweet,
 And longed to kiss her hands and lie
 A thousand summers at her feet.

One day, while young Mr. Tennyson was out driving with Miss Bradshaw, her mother, and three other ladies, someone asked the time. On this Tennyson took out his watch. Whereupon Miss Bradshaw leaned over a little, and her worshipper exclaimed "Don't." "Why, am I not to look?" asked the young lady; to which Tennyson replied, "No, it would stop to look at you." Mr. Yeld's story and verses are said to be derived from a member of the Bradshaw family, now resident in Notts, at no great distance from that western border of Lincolnshire in which Lord Tennyson spent his early years. We may not be far amiss in supposing that "member of the family" was the very damsel herself, at whose feet the poet, when she was young would lie a thousand summers; and who now, when sixty summers have passed, cherishes the memory of a gone romance and is careful, in her narration, to bring her mother and at least "three other ladies" on the scene of her maidenly triumphing.

THE
 COLLEGIAN.

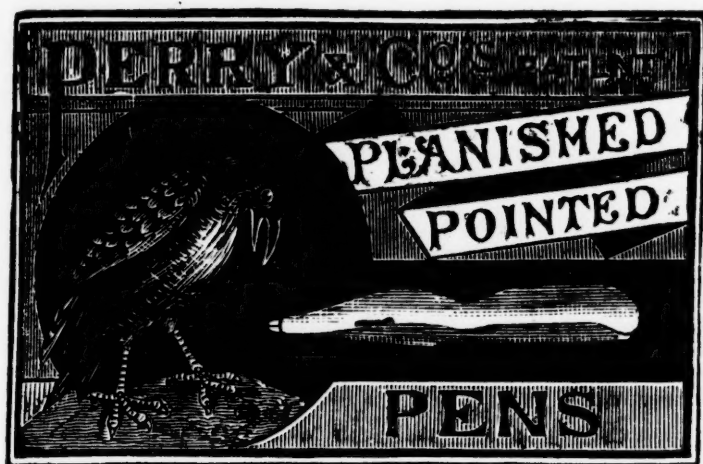
THESE are obvious reasons for the temporary shrinkage of "The Collegian." In the first place holidays kill the schoolboy. It is a case of transmigration of souls; he becomes a human creature of a more or less minute age and his chronicle merges into the history of the race. In a short word, holidays are the slayers of a species, the winter-time among the seasons of school. And among the frosts, the killing frosts, of the days that are just by, has come the influenza; not the influenza of Christmas colds and Christmas, sneezings, but the influenza of the Dengue, with its lassitudes, its world of minute pains, its sufficient fever, its headache. This, then, also tended to the schoolboy's annihilation, by the ex-

tension, in some cases at least, of the holidays. What might be the dangers which a week is powerful to avert remains yet a mystery. One great public school announced to the world that as a week would probably leave influenza in precisely the same conditions at its close, and as, to escape the danger of epidemic, holidays would need an extension to Easter—a seemingly not unwise conclusion—the reasons for a slight extension were not obvious. This, however, must remain a battle among authorities, not to be decided irresponsibly by the irreverent.

THE COMING TERM. **W**HEN, therefore, it comes to be a matter of news, it is to be mournfully acknowledged that, for the reasons here sketchily hinted at, and for others readily conceived, Time, the mother of events, has in the new year hitherto brought forth little of note. Ushaw has numbered another Bishop from among its professors with the title of an English see. Stonyhurst has lost an incomparable astronomer, on whose death among the stars but one sonnet—amazing to relate—has yet been printed. But these are matters of grown up and “old-boy” interest. It may, however, generally be noted, by way of necessary platitude, that, with the term following the holidays of Christmas, begins the earnest work of the school year. The pair of months preceding Christmas are days of *dilettante* work, too far removed from the excitements of the midsummer contests to be treated by any but wary students with strenuous and earnest interest. But the days that follow stand on a different scale. Easter makes too short a break between whiles to produce effects of an enervating sort, and here are six months of lengthening days for the racecourse of contending athletes. But this, perhaps, is talk on too restrained a level; this is rather for the aristocracy of the classes, the few of finer gifts who look on with personal feelings to the results of the coming terms. But I have found that to the less fortunate who happen to be serious, there are other incitements of equal avail, and they remember that midsummer is not the end of their strife, but a point far off for which they now distantly prepare.

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